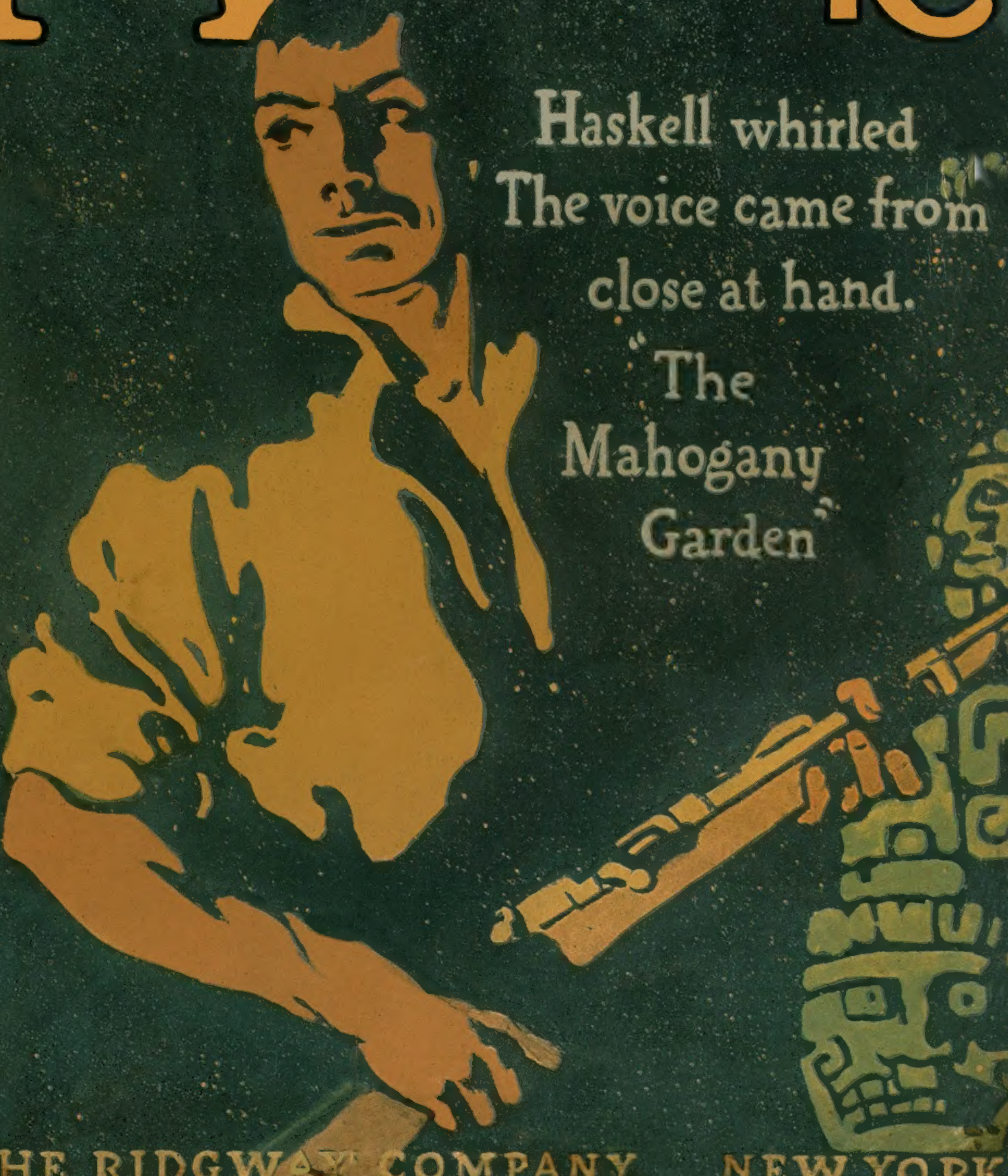
February 15 Cents

Adventure



Haskell whirled
The voice came from
close at hand.
"The
Mahogany
Garden"

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY NEW YORK

THE CLOVER CLUB

For Every Girl Who Wants More Money

IF you're a girl who wants more money, join the Clover Club—the luckiest, jolliest club for girls that ever existed. Clover Club members are "in clover" just all the time, for the one and only purpose of the organization is to provide spending money for its members.

Doesn't that sound delightful! Well, I assure you, the reality is twice as nice as you can possibly imagine. You see, the Clover Club is the daughter of *The Delineator*, the great woman's magazine, so everything has to be *just right*.

If you could only see the money some of the Clover Club girls are earning! It would convince you, I'm sure, that it's nothing but foolishness to scrimp and save and worry over the pennies when the same effort expended thru the Clover Club would bring in big, silver dollars.

The Clover Club is proving such a blessing to so many girls, who in the past had to do without the countless things their hearts craved—just because they lacked a little cash.

But these girls have discovered that it is no idle invitation that is extended when we say, "Just join the Clover Club then you can earn as much money as you want,"—there's absolutely no limit, except your own ambition, on the amount you may draw from our "Treasure Box."

Don't you want to join this jolly club of Clover Club girls and realize the joy of earning for yourself the things you have so long wished for? There's really never a reason why you should not, for the requirements for membership have been boiled down and condensed until there are practically no conditions whatever. Age does not matter, nor location, nor lack of business experience and leisure time—you don't even have to take the *Delineator!*

And there are no dues whatever, now nor later. It doesn't cost you a cent to join—a postal with your name and address is all that's really necessary.

But don't delay joining, for I am sure you'll regret it later if you do. "Jest 'fore Christmas" is the time of times to be a member of our club, for now, if ever, one needs a good plump pocketbook.

Besides offering you the opportunity of fattening your purse, the Clover Club gives you from time to time the most delightful little "encouragers." Just now it's the daintiest, little souvenir spoon you ever saw—solid silver, rich and heavy, designed especially for us and bearing our lucky four-leaf clover. Amid the leaves and blooms on the reverse side is a dear, little honeybee typifying the "Clover Club," that is "busy" gathering "sweetness" for others. There is no lettering on the spoon except such as is found on all the best silverware—the one word "sterling," which means solid silver the whole world over.

Now you girls who haven't yet joined, don't think for a moment it's too late for you, too, to secure a spoon. I haven't been trying to tantalize you with "what might have been, if——" But I do want you to know what a lucky, jolly club the Clover Club really is, so you will apply for membership at once and not miss any opportunities.

Did you ever "hear tell" of a jollier club? Aren't you going to join us right away now? Please do! Just as soon as I hear from you I'll mail you a copy of our little booklet "The Guide to Moneyville," that will tell you just how any girl who is longing for things money will buy may go about earning that money in a pleasant, dignified way.

So if you are wanting to get "into clover," write to me before bedtime to-night.

Most cordially yours,
HELEN HATHAWAY,
Secretary, the Clover Club.
ROOM 21, THE DELINEATOR, NEW YORK.

Vol. 1 ADVENTURE No. 4

Contents for February 1911

Cover Design	Charles B. Falls	
Tigre and Isola. A Story A Tale of a Brave Lover	Will H. Thompson	569
Two on Trinity. A Story	Frank Lillie Pollock	575
The Great Todescan's Secret Thrust. A Story A Sword-Play Romance of the Seventeenth Century	Agnes and Egerton Castle	579
Looking for Trouble. An Article Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer	Captain George B. Boynton	593
The Flies in Amber. A Story	Robert Dunn	604
Yellow Men and Gold. A Serial Story. IV A Tale of Treasure-Seeking in the South Pacific	Gouverneur Morris	613
The Ends of Justice. A Story	C. Langton Clarke	628
The Smooth-bore Hermanos. A Story	Carl Henry	633
A Samaritan of the Riverine. A Story An Adventure in the Australian Interior	Randolph Bedford	641
Dixie Pasha. A Story The Last Adventure of Sam Ames, Afro-American	Thomas P. Byron	653
Dynamite Stories. An Article Adventures in High Explosives	Hudson Maxim	661
Henery's Literary Success. A Story	J. W. Muller	666
Can a Man be True? A Serial Story. IV A Tale of Romance and Intrigue in the Balkans	Winifred Graham	675
He that Prepareth the Way. A Story	Radoslav A. Tsanoff	691
The Strangler. A Story	Paul E. Triem	701
With an Elephant Hunter in Africa. An Article An Adventure in the Ivory Trade	J. Herbert Welch	710
The Troth. A Story	Newton A. Fuessle	717
In the Noon of the Moon. A Story	Horace Hazeltine	723
The Mahogany Garden. A Complete Novelette A Tale of Adventure in Yucatan	Frank Stanton, Jr.	732

Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents
Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.

Copyright, 1911, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain

Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
Erman J. Ridgway, President Wm. L. Jennings, Secretary and Treasurer
Spring & Macdougal Streets, New York City
5, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England
Application for entry as Second-Class Matter at the Post-office at New York, N. Y., pending.

ADVENTURE *for* MARCH

"A magazine published by the publishers of EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE, but frankly made for the readers' recreative hours."

Phenomenal growth of circulation, countless letters of appreciation from readers who want to tell us how pleased they are, friendly comment from newspapers all over the country—these are the evidences that go to prove that we have hit the mark we aimed at in planning ***ADVENTURE.***

In the March ***ADVENTURE*** appears the first instalment of a new short serial story, ***Prester John,*** by John Buchan, which in its own field should repeat the hit made by "Yellow Men and Gold." ***Prester John*** is a tale of wild life, war, treasure and romance in Africa, with all the lure of "She."

The complete novelette of the month is ***Cupid and the Crook,*** by Dr. John I. Cochrane, author of "The Crook and the Doctor," which made such a hit in ***ADVENTURE*** three months ago. Dr. Cochrane has found a new field for striking fiction in Blackwell's Island, and some of the characters of the earlier novel reappear.

An author new to this magazine but possessing all the qualities to make him a favorite, appears in the story, ***God's Way in Keewatin,*** by Coningsby William Dawson. This story of wild life in the Hudson's Bay country recalls those earlier tales of Gilbert Parker, in which we heard a new note from the Northland.

There could be no greater contrast to this than ***The Mad Menu,*** by Leon Rutledge Whipple, a delicious story of the adventures that befell a legislative investigating committee when it ventured into the precincts of a State agricultural college.

In the chief detective story of the month, ***The Necklace and the Brooch,*** Wells S. Hastings has developed characters and situations that will hold the attention of every reader.

The White Queen of Sandakan, by James E. Dwyer, is a farcical adventure in the East Indies, with thrills and laughs happily mingled.

Old Jim, by Rufus F. Zogbaum, is a story of army life on the old frontier—a subject known to few as intimately as to this famous author and artist.

Bill Bowsun's Bare Escape, by J. W. Muller, is the next successor in that delicious series of comedy-adventure at sea of which Hiram Bunker, Henery and Captain Moses are the other essential characters.

The Informal Execution of Soupbone Pew, by Alfred Damon Runyon, is a masterly story of realism, with low life as its setting and with pictures and characters of grim impressiveness.

The foregoing are typical examples of the fiction that will make up ***ADVENTURE*** for March, and to them for good measure are added, as usual, three really important adventure articles, where fact interrupts fiction and challenges it with equally startling climaxes.

H. J. Moors, who lived for many years in Samoa as an intimate friend of Robert Louis Stevenson, has written for ***ADVENTURE*** an account of his experiences when as a youth he was wrecked on a lonesome island of the South Pacific. Captain George B. Boynton, master adventurer, continues the account of his life of excitement under the title, ***Looking for Trouble;*** and Hudson Maxim, master of high explosives, tells more ***Dynamite Stories*** out of his own experiences.

If you ever begin to read ADVENTURE, you will not be able to quit.

Adventure
February
1911
Vol·1
No·4

TIGRE *and* ISOLA

by Will H. Thompson

Author of "The High Tide at Gettysburg"

IT SELDOM rains in Arizona. The narrow valleys that drain southward into Mexico are the most arid in America. But, on the night old Nuñez Pico died, a black cloud rolled over the ragged rim of the Canille Mountains, dragged itself slowly along, was ripped by the granite teeth, collapsed, and fell in a deluge of rain. The bare stone shoulders of the mountain heaved the floods into the canyons, from whose monstrous throats it came bellowing into the valley. The river-bed was overbrimmed and the lowland became a sea.

Far into the night we sat about the long table upon which lay the shrouded form of the old Spaniard. The solemnity of the vigil, the feeble light, and the tumult of the storm depressed our minds and caused our speech to be low and infrequent, and it was a distinct relief to me when Major Blanchard said:

"Twenty years ago to-night we had just such a storm as this."

Something in the tone of his voice, and in the introspective eyes of the old soldier, moved me to say: "Major, if there is a story waiting to be told, it would be kind of you to give it to us now. This watch is going to be heavy and long."

He mused for a moment, then said:

"It is hardly a story, yet more than an episode. It was the finest tragedy I ever witnessed."

Without further urging he began.

"Nuñez Pico, after fifteen years of life upon this ranch, revisited his early home in

Copyright, 1911, by The Ridgway Company. All rights reserved.

Spain, and returned, bringing with him his only daughter, who, after her mother's death, had been reared and educated in Seville. It is not surprising that she found little happiness in this isolated valley. She was a splendid woman, and her superiority of blood and training was at once and universally recognized by the inhabitants of this half-wild land. None of the young *rancheros* was bold enough to lay siege to her heart, and the 'Lady Isola,' as she was usually called, passed many lonely days.

"Tigre Palladis was a gambler, a robber, and many times a homicide. He was born to his estate of lawlessness. His mother was a Spanish-Indian half-blood, his father an American adventurer of the worst type, who was killed while Tigre was a babe. Possibly it was because of his father's ignominious death that the boy always bore his mother's name.

"The young devil grew into a marvelous physical manhood. Indeed, he was the handsomest animal I ever saw—very tall, of an exceedingly powerful build, and with a lightness and impetuosity of movement that indicated immense vital force. Dark of face and dark of heart he was, as all who knew him knew, yet there was something in his contemptuous defiance of lawful restraint, and in his measureless strength and lightning-like energy of action in emergency, that aroused enough of hero-worship in the hearts of the half-wild people of the valley to have spared him long and to have shielded him from the vengeance earned by many a desperate deed, had he not chanced to meet the Lady Isola.

"The love that flamed in his volcanic heart did not illuminate his reason. It did not counsel patience, reformation of character, abandonment of lawless ventures, and subjugation of his turbulent spirit, but seemed rather to multiply his activities and to increase the violence of his temperament. Had the lady accepted his attentions or even yielded the fine courtesy she gave to the poorest peon upon her father's ranch, it might have been better for her and for him at the last. But she seemed both to scorn and to fear him. She would neither receive him in her home nor walk abroad when he was in the vicinity.

"I knew Nuñez Pico well. His was the loftiest soul I ever hope to find on earth. The prayer of his distressed child to be permitted to return to Spain moved him deeply, but he refused to believe that danger threatened her, and he could not bear to part with her. In the simple sincerity of his nature he sought the disturber of his home and pleaded with him to leave his daughter in peace. But the passionate idolater would give no promise and swore that his love should yield to no earthly bar.

"However, after this interview, Tigre left the valley and was heard of in Mexico. Pico believed the trouble ended. Not so the Lady Isola. It was plain that her distress was unabated. She clung to the house, not venturing into the fine garden that lay between her window and the river, forsaking her loved hammock on the wide eastern porch, and pacing the long hall with a nervous step. In her dilated eyes one could mark the panic of her soul.

"A month after Tigre's departure I visited Pico. Never before had I seen the garden so beautiful. The intense heat of the afternoon failed at sunset, and the full moon rose in cloudless beauty beyond the crenelated wall of the Canille Mountains. The air was delicious in its clearness and serenity. So great was the temptation to escape the stifling heat, still retained by the rooms, that Isola yielded to her father's request and mine, and came out upon the east porch and sat for an hour listening to our talk, but taking no part therein

"The soft moonlight fell over her like a veil. It seemed more to conceal than to reveal her. It dimmed the traces of sorrow and softened the unnatural luminosity of her eyes. She was very beautiful and, as I watched her face from my position in the shadow of the great clematis vine, her expression of hopelessness and terror was almost unbearable. I was younger then than now, and, as I said, Isola Pico was very beautiful.

"Moving my seat into the light, I looked across the silent garden and little shining river to the highlands beyond. In the silvery glory the landscape came out like a cameo. The garden seemed alert and watching with a thousand eyes. Beyond the garden the slender river gleamed in its stony bed. Wasted by the Summer's heat, it was too weak to grieve. In the lowland beyond the river a space of alfalfa ran to the first swell of the foot-hills. Upon the plain at the base of the rise, a great rock, deeply imbedded in the earth, and rising fifty feet above the surface, was all in shadow; but, as the moon overlooked the mountain crest, the top of the rock seemed slowly to rise from out the darkness and break into the white flood.

"This movement appeared so real and affirmative that I turned to Isola to learn if she had noticed it. She did not heed my action, but sat with her eyes fixed upon the rock with such a stare as one might have who saw the rending of the solid earth. Quickly turning, I saw that on the top of the rock a man was standing, with lifted face and folded arms. The pose was grandly pathetic. The form looked larger than human in the wan moonlight. I was about to break the silence with an exclamation, when a mighty voice, a noble barytone, came rolling across the distance, wave upon wave, bearing the burden of an old and half-forgotten love-song:

'The God who wrought thee over-sweet
  In Love's old garden long ago,
Gave me the curse of wandering feet,
  The power to know, and only know,
That even God shall not repeat
  The agony of loving so!'

"When the refrain was reached I was thrilled as the singer substituted another name for the one written in the old song, and the night was stirred by a burst of passionate melody that will haunt my memory while I live:

'Isola! Love, I love thee!
  Isola! Hear my cry!
The skies are black above me!
  Love me, or bid me die!
    Isola! Isola!
  Love me, or let me die!'

"As the wonderful voice held the last word at the top of the register without a quaver, the lady arose, stood unsteadily for a moment, then turned and walked proudly to the hallway and disappeared within. Nuñez Pico rose and, without a word, followed his daughter.

"That night I could not sleep, and near morning left my room and paced the garden walks until daybreak. Then, drawn by curiosity, I crossed the river and came to the great rock at the foot of the rise. Here I found the trace of a horse, coming and going, and, behind the rock, evidence that the horse had stood there for many hours.

"The Lady Isola came to the breakfast the following morning without a tear-stain upon her face, her features set and cold. The look in her proud eyes seemed to say: 'My hours of terror are done! I am master of myself!'

"She moved about the house, the porches and the garden as freely as of old, but with a different manner. Then it was with the languorous grace of one in love with idleness; now she moved with the proud militancy of one who asserts dominion and defies aggression. I was glad of the changed mien, and so, I think, was Pico.

"When on that evening she passed me, going down into the garden, she seemed to have grown taller, so martial was her carriage. I sat long in the gathering dusk with little note of passing time, when suddenly, a woman's shriek, clear, high and long-drawn, rose from the garden, followed almost instantly by the thunder of galloping hoofs upon the stony bed of the river, a plash of water, the muffled sound of a falling earth-bank, and then the lessening throb of flying feet that died upon the night.

"The shriek, the rush of the trampling feet through the garden, the vault of the steed over the adobe wall, and the uproar of the steel-shod hoofs upon the stones of the river-bed did not occupy five seconds, and before I could leap from the porch and rush through the garden shrubbery the beat of the retreating feet sounded faint and far.

"The aroused household acted with desperate energy. Swift messengers called the assistance of all the neighboring *rancheros*. The cinching of saddle-girths, the clank of arms, the trampling of impatient horses, the sharp orders of Pico, and the headlong incoming of horsemen from the outer night, told of stern preparation that boded ill for the frenzied abductor.

"But before the pursuit could be taken up the storm came over the Obsidian Hills and broke upon the valley with lightning, thunder, roaring wind and such a downpour of rain that within half an hour the river could not be crossed except by a détour of many miles, and then only by leading our horses singly upon a frail swinging bridge intended only for pedestrians. However, the cloudburst passed as quickly as it came, and the trail was taken before midnight. Despite the obliterating effects of the storm, the trace was easy to follow, for one had joined us whose fame as a tracker in mountain and desert was supreme in Arizona and Mexico, and when Cady rode out, taking the trail at a gallop, all were content to follow blindly.

"None questioned his skill, nor his coolness and courage in the hour of conflict. All had heard stories of his almost miraculous feats in the following of horse-thieves and marauding Indians to their ruin, but few, I think, were prepared for the ease and certainty with which this man-hunter carried the trail at a speed as high as we dared urge our horses, over flinty mesas, up slopes of broken lava, through thorny fields of cactus and sage-brush, across a succession of lateral ravines that now, for the first time in many years, brought down to the river a hundred roaring streams, and on across scrub and chaparral, to the south, toward the outlaw's hoped-for refuge in the mountains of Mexico.

"It was a wild ride and there were thirty wild men riding. Pico, half crazed by the horror of his daughter's possible fate, urging on with brief, inflammatory appeals the already excessive ardor of the pursuers; Cady, silent and alert, rode a rod or two in advance, followed by Kenneth, Pico's foreman, a gigantic Scotchman, a violent man of great physical power and energy. I rode with Pico when the exigencies of the trail permitted. The others followed as best they could keep the pace.

"At sunrise we were thirty miles south of the Pico ranch and upon the high mesa two miles east of the river. Here the trail entered, but did not cross, a deep and rough ravine that ran at right angles to the course hitherto taken by the fleeing desperado. Cady plunged without hesitation down the steep bank and clung to the lessening trace over bare spaces of slab stone, clean-washed by the storm, and across acres of boulder-covered bars, until the portal of the canyon was reached, where the storms of ages had cut a narrow channel to the river. Before this rock-walled gateway Cady halted, leaped from his horse and waited until all had come up.

" 'Dismount, men!' he said, 'The beast is at bay.'

" 'This canyon,' he said, 'twists to the right a hundred yards below, then opens into a big triangle facing the river. The jaws are two hundred yards apart, but each jaw is jammed square against the precipitous bank of the river. The bank on this side is a basalt bluff twenty feet high; the opposite bank is low, and a trail leads up a ravine from the water to the Obsidian Hills. Tigre knows the trail, but he forgot the storm. Do you hear the roar of the river? It is filled with jagged blocks of basalt, and the flood is now a regular water-cyclone. No horse or man that ever lived could cross it. The game is bagged. There is a heavy thicket along the bluff on this side of the river and he will be in the brush. There will be a fight. Every man must cover himself as best he can. Take no chances on Tigre Palladis. Shoot anything that moves; the woman will be hid.'

"Dismounted, we followed down the gorge until we reached the outlet and noted the heavy wall of brush that hid the river from our view. Beyond this the rage of the waters made itself manifest in terrible bellowings. Cady said:

" 'There may be trouble in the first fifty yards of open ground, and every man must make straight to the thicket. Move rapidly. If Tigre fires, riddle the spot from which the shot comes, and run in upon him. Shoot him down; he will not surrender.'

"Our rush followed, and was met by the crack of a Winchester. Ramon Aguates, a young *ranchero*, threw up his hands, spun around upon his toes and fell stone-dead. He had hardly touched the ground when another man, close by my side, sank slowly to his knees, gave a little sigh, and crumpled up into a shapeless heap. Tigre's second shot was not heard, as our volley came at the same instant. Our second volley cut a wide swath in the foliage at the point where the smoke from the desperado's rifle hung, and was instantly followed by a woman's scream.

" 'Hold, men!' cried Pico, 'We are killing my child!'

"Cady sprang into the open and, raising his right hand, cried:

" 'Tigre, give us the lady uninjured and I swear that you shall go and not be followed!'

"No answer came, and it may be that the river's voice drowned the call. Neither did any shot follow. Not knowing what to expect, we crept forward, taking the protection of every shrub and stone, until we reached and entered the thicket.

"Here we recognized our disadvantage in that we dared not fire upon any moving thing until we first ascertained whether it be friend or foe. But Tigre would know that every sound or motion marked an enemy. Yet, to our amazement, no rifle cracked, and neither sight nor sound indicated the presence of our desperate quarry.

"At last we came upon the body of the horse. The splendid animal had been struck by a number of our bullets and, to put it out of its misery, its throat had been cut. How cool the fellow must have been to conceive and execute the deed of mercy in a moment of such mortal peril! Near the body, beside an ugly pool of blood, we found one of the Lady Isola's slippers and a few scattered beads from a turquoise necklace. The thoroughly ransacked thicket yielded nothing more. As we stood upon the rock rim, looking down into the boiling water, Pico cried:

"'He has killed her, thrown her body into the river, and then drowned himself!'

"I felt this to be true and was about to say so, when Cady, who had been standing apparently lost in thought, called to me in sharp tones, indicative of great excitement:

"'Major, give me your glass, quick!'

"I handed to him the large field-glass I carried. Looking through it at the farther shore for a moment, he turned to me and cried:

"'As God lives, the madman has crossed that water-hell!'

"'Impossible!' I cried. 'A man would be dashed to pieces in five seconds!'

"'Nevertheless it is true,' he said. 'Look for yourself!'

"Taking the glass, I searched the farther shore, and there, plainly to be seen, were the deeply set footprints of a man in the wet sand at the water's edge, and higher, upon the rocks of the ravine, were the splotched and straggling lines made by the water drained from the wet clothing.

"The outlaw's tremendous achievement, which under other circumstances would have lifted my admiration to enthusiasm, passed from my thought as I marked that his footprints were *alone*. No small tracks were beside his, nor were there any traces of a dragged body. Evidently in his flight from the grasp of the river Tigre had not turned to look for his pursuers, nor down the stream for the poor girl's body, if the hand of murder had given it to the waves.

"A hush of awe and horror fell upon us, and many seconds passed before it was broken by Cady's low, masterful voice:

"'Pico, take two men, go down to the mouth of Alkali Wash and watch for the body. All the drift swings in there when the water is high. Ride fast and you will be in time. The Major and I will see this hunt to the end. Come, Major, we can cross two miles above here, but it will be six miles as we ride.'

"Back we went to our horses, leaving four men to care for the dead, and at last, after many slides and zigzags, reached the river at a point where the current was slow. Cady's horse took the water by a plunge from the crumbling bank, and we followed, swimming our animals to a narrow shingle at the base of the opposite bluff. Following this stony passageway a short distance, we scaled the hill after a struggle that left a number of our horses useless, and after a brief rest fifteen of us rode on.

"We struck the trail two miles from the river, at the point where the ravine rose to the level of the mesa, and followed it across rugged country—hard upon our horses, and harder, too, it must have been, for the indomitable man who crossed it on foot, keeping a direct course for the mountains.

"THE blood-stains, found in many places, indicated severe wounds, yet the length of his strides and the deep impressions of his feet proved that he had passed at great speed. What exhaustless fountain of infernal energy supplied the strength to maintain this reckless waste? Many times we asked ourselves this question as hour after hour we urged on our flagging horses. No animal is equal to man at his best, and here, I think, was Nature's masterpiece.

"We climbed the first foothills at sunset. As night came on with clouds obscuring the moon the pursuit became impossible and we unsaddled our tired horses, spread our blankets and slept until daybreak.

"Frequently, since recovering the trail, Cady had dismounted and closely examined the footprints of the fleeing man, with a look in his eyes that puzzled me. It betokened amazement, admiration and something akin to pity.

"When we took the saddle at sunrise the pace was forced, and within a mile we came to the spot where Tigre had passed the night, and I was amazed to find that, wounded and wearied unto death as he must have been, he had, with much patient toil, gathered from far and near enough of weed-stems and grass-blades to make a soft couch whereon to pass the night. The scant growth upon the waterless mesa betrayed the labor necessary in such gleaning. The bed, at about the position occupied by the sleeper's breast, was heavily stained with blood. Perhaps it was on account of his wounds that he gave such effort to provide a comfortable couch. Cady looked steadily at the pitiful bed, carefully examined the blood-stains, then turned to mount his horse, muttering:

"'My God! I knew it! And yet it seems impossible!'

"The hunt went remorselessly to the end. Through beds of cactus that stabbed and stung, up slopes of broken lava that tore the horses' feet, through greasewood wastes rising to the sterile buttresses of the Obsidian Hills we followed on until I began to wonder if human feet had made this trail.

"At last, as the sun was low in the west, we entered a canyon leading up into the heart of the mountain range. A slender rill issued from it, and a dense clump of brush filled the bottom from wall to wall. We were following the foot of the basaltic bluff upon our left and were about to enter the thicket, when Cady suddenly halted and threw up his hand with a gesture so full of meaning that all pulled up and every rifle was thrown forward for instant use.

"After a long pause, in which no word was spoken, Cady signaled for all to dismount. As we stood in silence, I plainly heard the heavy breathing of some laboring thing, and the slight rustling of the brush. The sounds slowly approached, the branches parted, and Tigre Palladis stepped into the open. A dozen rifles covered him in a second, and a volley would have instantly followed had not Cady's voice, sharp and imperious, rung out:

"'Hold, men! There is no need *now!*'

"The outlaw stood motionless, looking straight into the muzzles of the leveled guns. His aspect was terribly pathetic. The butt of his heavy rifle rested upon the ground, his right hand upon its muzzle. The torn and disheveled clothing spoke pitifully of the dreadful journey. His head was bare, the waves of black hair tumbling about his neck. His face was shrunken and pallid, and the nostrils were updrawn, as we often see them in the article of death. The lips were apart, like those of a runner at the end of a desperate race, but the jaws were locked and grim. His eyes were glorious.

"I once joined in a lion hunt in upper Nubia. A great male lion, many times wounded, was surrounded in a copse of mimosa brush. With twenty guns leveled, we stood waiting while the beaters hurled fragments of stone into the cover. Instantly the branches parted and, with bristling mane and grand uplifted head, the desert king came forth. For a moment he stood in his defiant attitude, gazing at the threatening guns, then the royal mane fell, the great eyes blenched, the huge head sank, and the fierce beast turned and slunk into the copse.

"I recalled this Nubian episode as I now stood looking upon this hunted thing. But this was not a lion—it did not blench!

"There was a fearful silence. No one seemed to know what to do or say. At last Cady's voice broke the silence, the low, measured tones vibrating with feeling.

"'Tigre, God knows I should like to save you. If the Lady Isola——'

"His words were abruptly broken off by Kenneth. The big Scotchman roughly pushed him aside, fiercely crying:

"'Save that bloody brute? Hold up your hands, you cowardly murderer!'

"What we then saw was a most wonderful thing. The outlaw's face glowed with such radiancy as comes to men only in moments of ineffable joy. With electrical swiftness the heavy rifle was whisked backward, whirled with a swish over his right shoulder, and hurled forward with the restsistless force of a cannon-shot. I heard the flutter as the weapon spun in the air like a revolving wheel, the crunch of the splintered ribs, and the sickening smash as the body of Kenneth was slammed back against the canyon wall, as a wind-gust slams a door. Then came a spurt of smoke from a dozen rifles, and the jar of the volley.

"The combined blow of the bullets shook the outlaw's breast as though he had been struck with a heavy club, and a great red splotch flared out upon his bosom. The light slowly faded from his dauntless eyes, and, feebly turning, like one who walks in his sleep, he passed within the copse. An instant later we heard the fall of a heavy body, and then out rang a cry, a shriek of frenzied agony, a woman's wail, carrying in its tones such horror and despair as to chill the blood within my heart. I turned to Cady, and the expression upon his white and drawn face appalled me. His hands shook as they slowly relaxed, dropping his rifle upon the ground. In a low voice, trembling with emotion, he cried:

"'Great God, I knew it! We shot her at the river, and he swam with her through that water-hell! For two days he carried her mangled body before our horses! I knew why his footprints were so deep! I knew for whom that couch of grass was made! At last he knew she was dying, and he came out to be killed! God of heaven! what manner of man was this!'

"Rushing into the brush, I found the body of Palladis lying upon the back with arms outspread. The dying woman had crawled to his side; her arms were about his head, her lips upon his face, and, as she kissed him, she cried with a passion that should have mocked the power of death:

"'Oh, Tigre! Tigre! I will tell you now!'

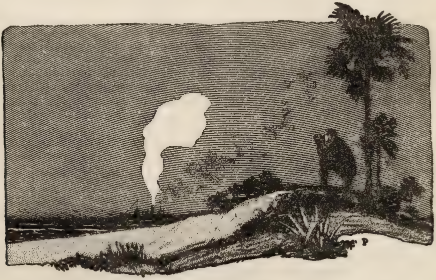
"Feebly she drew her lips to his ear and whispered something I could not hear. Her arms tightened about his head, there was a slight tremor of the slender body—and the Lady Isola Pico was dead."

Major Blanchard rose and, stepping to the table, lifted the covering from the face of his old friend. He looked long and steadily upon the placid features of the dead. As he replaced the veil, he said:

"In the cemetery at Old Nogales there stands a beautiful monument of pink onyx, bearing the simple inscription:

TIGRE AND ISOLA

"Nuñez Pico was the noblest man I ever knew."



TWO ON TRINITY

by Frank Lillie Pollock

IN ALL the seas there are few more beautiful spots, none more lonely, than Trinity Island. It lies in the high longitudes and the low latitudes, and is a mere horseshoe of coral rising out of fathomless black water, overgrown with plume-like cocoanut palms, and a hundred long Pacific leagues from other land and from the beaten roads of ocean traffic. Beyond the occasional smoke-trail on the sky of a distant war-ship or a misguided tramp steamer, navigation never comes near Trinity Island; nevertheless, years ago, a great naval Power saw fit to seize upon the spot for a coaling-station.

Perhaps the excellent anchorage in the

lagoon tempted to this step; at any rate a flagstaff was planted, sheds were put up for the good Australian anthracite, and provision was made for a resident keeper. Most of the coal is still there: the flag still flies, and the keeper is visited by a gunboat once in four or five months; but the same keeper seldom sees many visits of the ship.

Coulson accepted the berth because he had played the prodigal son in Melbourne and Sydney and had come to the end of even his husks. He knew it would be lonely, but he did not think he would mind. He would have time for meditation and for reading. He had always had a great idea of improving his mind, and he packed in his chest a "History of Europe," in seventeen volumes, green cloth, gilt, which he had got from a man who owed him thirty pounds.

It was a ten days' run from Sydney. They set down his chest in the galvanized-iron house on the beach, and Coulson saw the steamer evaporate into a smudge of smoke on the glittering horizon. Turning to look round, he could see almost the whole extent of his domain. The clustered palms rustled unceasingly in the wind, with the flagstaff standing bare among them, and the ugly heaps of coal below. The surf circled him rhythmically with its monotonous *"s-sh—crash! s-sh—crash!"* Sky and sea were as empty and shining as twin silver mirrors, and between the double immensities the island seemed like a speck under the glaring lens of a great microscope.

Thus began the strangest period of Coulson's life. At first he found it as peaceful and pleasant as he had anticipated. He bathed in the surf; he fished from a canoe; he looked for pearls; he read his "History of Europe" to the middle of the first volume, and then marked the place in case he should ever want to come back to it. The atmosphere of the island was not favorable to hard reading, but he discovered that there was a mild amusement to be derived from solitaire games of euchre and seven-up, his right hand against his left. He played checkers in the same way, and tried chess, but gave it up; it was too much like trying to lift oneself by one's boot-straps.

It was a foregone conclusion that this could not last. Only a saint or an idiot can endure solitude, it is said, and Coulson was neither. He had been there about a month when the sudden sense of his hideous isolation struck him like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. A vivid picture flashed through his mind of the roaring streets of Sydney; of the theaters, the cafés, the bars where he met a friend at every turn; and as he looked over the cloudless circle of untroubled sea a sick horror of the place came upon him, an overpowering terror of the sky and the water, of everything that was so beautiful and so unhuman, so that he crept back trembling into his little bungalow with the sweat streaming down his face.

For a time—he could never have told how long—Coulson scarcely ate or slept. He tramped the beaches, he paddled far out to sea, trying mechanically to find relief in fatigue, and finding none. All day the great blue circles glared at him unwinkingly, mockingly; he hated them; at night the blues were merely three shades darker and fired with incandescent planets, and he loathed them. And day and night the merciless pulse of the surf beat like a swinging pendulum in his brain. He could never get beyond hearing of that sound. It was the very voice of the solitude. At moments it seemed that he could endure no more, and he would fling himself down and sob and curse in rage and loneliness.

* * *

BUT this period of torment wore itself out. His nerves became dulled, and Coulson regained a little of his old equanimity. It was not the same, however. The almost narcotic peace of the first days was gone, and he found himself sinking into a black melancholia. Never had he been so conscious, with a strange terror, of the omnipotent forces around him. The wind in the palms seemed to murmur threats or warnings. Sky and sea were full of menace, and he watched the revolution of the days with suspicion. He felt certain that disastrous events of some sort were about to take place, and his heart was filled with a sullen bitterness against the men who had exiled him on this reef to be the plaything of these invisible powers.

This state of nervous expectancy lasted for weeks, but nothing happened. Now and again, to relieve the strain, he resumed his games of cards, his right hand against his left, and it was through this amusement that he came to his great discovery.

In these highly introspective games he always identified himself with his left hand; the cards he dealt to the right he considered as those of his opponent, and he could not help being struck by the regularity with which he beat himself. He tried checkers, with the same result. Luck and skill greater than his own seemed to direct the fall of the cards and the movement of the men against him, and so it was that Coulson came by degrees to realize that he was not alone on Trinity Island.

Who his invisible opponent was on the other side of the table he could not guess, but he understood clearly that there was nothing supernatural about him. It was a man very like himself—indeed, he always thought of him simply as the Man—and Coulson recognized rather vaguely that it was in some way his own fault that he could not enter into closer relations with him. But the mere intangible presence of the Man afforded Coulson extraordinary pleasure. He knew by some instinct when he was present and when absent; he talked to him, and though he received no audible answers, he felt that he was understood.

At last the greatly-desired consummation took place—he was able to see him. What he looked like, Coulson could hardly have said, for he did not pay much attention to either the Man's appearance or dress. In fact, he had a confused idea that if he had met him anywhere but on this dreary island he would not have been able to see him at all. But this did not matter; it was with the mind of the Man that Coulson was chiefly concerned, and he no longer wondered that he had been beaten in every game when such a brain was against him.

They talked together at length, or, rather, the stranger talked and Coulson listened with growing admiration of the commanding forces of intellect and will that the Man displayed. As yet he knew nothing of the newcomer's history, but he detected in his friend a bitterness against the world equal to his own; and he divined the existence of a vendetta that must end in a day of terrible reckoning. The Man was not a man to sit down tamely under injustice.

The supply gunboat arrived, and its captain was apparently surprised to find Coulson healthy and moderately cheerful, though disinclined to talk much. During the vessel's brief stay in the harbor the Man disappeared; Coulson easily understood that he preferred to remain for the present unseen, and he said nothing to the crew of the gunboat on the subject.

The steamer went back to the world again; the Man returned from his hiding-place, and after this the relations of the two prisoners became more confidential. The stranger had been in every part of the world where Coulson had been, and he seemed to know everything that Coulson had particularly wished to know. A curious fact was that all this information was communicated in a way that made Coulson feel that he had learned it all at some previous time and afterward forgotten it. But their conversation turned continually back to one subject—to the undeserved sufferings endured by both of them, and to the idea of retaliation.

By degrees he learned his companion's history. Like himself, the Man had endured ill-fortune in the southern seas. He had been persecuted by cabals and cliques of powerful enemies; he had been kidnapped, he had been imprisoned, and, finally escaping, he had fled to this loneliest part of the Pacific to mature his schemes for a triumphant return to the world.

Reflecting with indignation upon this tale, Coulson recognized its similarity to his own experience. He, too, he seemed to remember, had been persecuted all his life; he, too, had been imprisoned upon Trinity Island, surely by no will of his own. He, too, had suffered injustice of every sort; he was the world's creditor and, as he meditated, his bitterness grew to a quiet but fiercely burning heat of anger against the powers that had cut him off from all the desirable things of life and marooned him upon this ghastly rock in the deep seas.

The two men discussed these things and revolved plans of action. It would have suited Coulson's spirit to return to London or Sydney and strew the streets with dynamite, or poison the water-mains; but these places were far away. So the outer world reposed in quiet, unconscious that an island in the central Pacific was fizzing and hissing with vengeance like a lighted bomb.

Then came a novel disturbance. Across the water from the west boomed a sound as of distant thunder out of the spotless horizon. It was the war-ships of the Australian squadron at target-practise under the sky-line, and a little later a faint haze of smoke arose like a far-away sea-fight.

Coulson listened to the noise, and hated it. There, out of sight, was the enemy, strong with his brutal ironclads, every one of which Coulson would gladly have seen at the bottom of the Pacific. All day long the sound came at intervals; that night he saw search-lights flashing across the sky like a northern aurora; and early in the morning there was a long streak of smoke in the south which the fleet left as it steamed down toward Auckland.

This interruption of his quiet strangely disturbed Coulson, but an odd chance turned it to his advantage. On the following day he went out in his canoe to fish, going farther out to sea than usual. He espied a great reddish object floating awash with the waves. It looked very like a sea-serpent, and he paddled toward it. On a nearer inspection he recognized it at once. It was a Whitehead torpedo, undoubtedly lost from a battle-ship during torpedo-practise, and drifting dead and derelict with its propelling gear run down. Being without its "war head," it was temporarily as harmless as a log, and Coulson took a hitch of a line a around it and towed it to the island.

The discovery of this torpedo raised in him a multitude of excited imaginings. From that day he had a deadly weapon at hand, and the Man suggested to him many plans for its use. He might sail far out to sea, signal some passing steamer with a flare by night, and contrive to attach the torpedo to her side. Or he might wait for the very unlikely event of a ship approaching the island. But in the end it seemed best to commence his operations by waiting for the supply-ship and sending her to the bottom of the lagoon with celerity and precision.

In the absence of the percussion apparatus there would be some difficulty about exploding the torpedo, but Coulson with much labor drilled a hole into the powder chamber and attached a fuse enclosed in a rubber tube to protect it from wet. Then there was nothing to do but wait.

It was nearly a month before the gunboat was due, and there had been no ships in sight since the departure of the ironclads, when late one afternoon a trail of smoke appeared on the sky in the east. It grew and approached, though slowly, and in time the hull rose above the water. An hour later Coulson made her out distinctly with his glass. She was one of those jerry-built ocean tramps, constructed by the mile and cut off in suitable lengths, and by her painfully slow movements she was having trouble in her engine-room.

She passed the island within a mile, and had begun to increase the distance a little when she suddenly stopped, a cloud of steam escaping from her waste-pipe.

Coulson had watched her with intense interest from the moment she came into view. And the Man was at his shoulder. When she stopped, Coulson put down his glass calmly; he knew that his enemy had been delivered into his hands.

The equatorial darkness shut down like a sudden curtain, and the steamer's lights twinkled like smoky stars across the water. An hour after sunset they went down to the beach where the canoe lay, attached the torpedo to a towline, and the Man got into the little craft and paddled out of the lagoon with the great red cigar in his wake. Coulson remained ashore; he understood that his companion was the right person to carry the business through.

But though he stood on the beach, he seemed to follow the progress of the canoe as if he had been aboard her. He could even feel the shock of the waves and the successive impulses of the paddle-strokes as the Man, grim and silent in the stern, forced the craft forward. He could see the steamer's lights growing brighter; he heard presently the sound of voices and the clinking of hammers, and then he saw the tall black sides just ahead, towering up through the blue gloom.

Slowly the canoe approached the ship's overhanging stern. She was high in the water, so that a great part of her rudder showed above the surface, and the Man drew in the torpedo and made it fast. Coulson watched him with agonized suspense as he fumbled for matches to light the fuse and at that moment there was a sharp jingle of bells from the vessel's interior.

A tremor shook her, and the water boiled suddenly underneath. The canoe collapsed, and Coulson found himself unexpectedly, incomprehensibly precipitated into cool water, struggling to grasp the canoe in the midst of foam and a horrible suction that was drawing him irresistibly downward.

A moment later there was nothing to be seen above the water but a dozen crimson threads drifting up through the froth, and there was an irregular note in the pulsation of the propeller.

The mate, leaning over the stern, signaled to the bridge.

"Stop her!" he called. "Something has fouled the screw."

THE GREAT TODESCAN'S SECRET THRUST

By Agnes & Egerton Castle

Authors of "The Pride of Jennico" etc.

> They had their time, and we may say: *they were!*
> Don Lewis of Madrid is now the sole remaining master of the world.
>
> BEN JONSON (*The New Inn*).

IT WAS close upon noon, hour of the "ordinary" at the Bolt-in-Tun, that noted tavern over against Ludgate, by the Fleet.

Hither a goodly company of your cavaliero gentry, whether captains of fortune or town gulls, were wont daily to foregather, intent as much upon the gleaning of foreign news as upon the savory promise of a good dinner.

For the common room of the Bolt-in-Tun was rarely devoid of some new great man fresh from oversea experience and full of tales as a hen is of clucks. Here might you at all times reckon upon the diversion of tall stories of Bohemia or Eldorado; of Castile's splendor or cruelty of border onsets and leaguers; of outfalls and camisadoes in Portugal or Muscovy; of boardings, wrecks, and discoveries about the Spanish Main—admirable and much-admired adventures which nevertheless seemed to have left their hero none the wealthier, save in fine-chased outlandish oaths.

But this day, the last of September in the year 1602, forty-fourth of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the ruffling community at the "Tun"—old and young, all lovers of a blade—was too deeply engrossed in the topic of the London hour to have much interest to spare for travelers' tales.

Yet the latest oracle of them all, a man, tall, gray-bearded, of freebooting manner and conscious truculence of mien, was not only well prepared (as his attitude testified) to fill his post with due relish, but, unlike many of his kind, bore evidence of having really countered many hard knocks of fate. One hollow orbit, a gash that had shorn his weather-beaten countenance of the best part of an ear, not to speak of a left hand reduced to one finger and the thumb—each memento of adventure might in its turn have served for fitting introduction to some tall story.

For the moment he sat in moody silence, his single eye roaming fierce and wary from one to the other of the eager faces about him—watching for the chance, it seemed, of springing upon the talk and holding it as his own. From time to time he lifted the ale pot to his lips with that mutilated hand that yet showed menace in its pinch. At length a scanty stock of patience seemed, on a sudden, to fail him; for he raised a voice that drew every eye suddenly full upon him.

"Vincent, again!" quoth he. "By the curse of Mahound, and who may this Vincent be that ye all should be gathering, in thought, like so many rats to-day round his carcass? Let us be talking of living men, my springalls, and let the dead go rot; for, by your laments, I take it that he's dead in his bed even as any old woman—this same gallant Vincentio Saviolo!"

For an instant there was that pause around the table which marks some monstrous pronouncement; then a sudden clamor among the huffing crowd, a scraping of boots and spurs as sundry started to their feet, a mouthing of oaths, a jingling of cans as others turned upon their bench to confront the blasphemer. It required all mine host's persuasiveness to quell the rising threat—aided, no doubt, by the steadiness of the adventurer's single orb that looked with such mastery out of the tanned visage.

"I pray you, masters, no tumult here, and on this day! And pray you, good Captain Strongi'th'arm, you should know that the name of Vincent Saviolo, the great master of fence, who died but yestereve, is one we speak here with respect. Where shall he be mourned more than at the Bolt-in-Tun, which has sounded to his tread daily these twenty years? But you are from foreign parts, Captain, and have not known him."

"'Twas the tallest man of his hands, at all manner of weapons, but above all at rapier play," asserted a gallant from the end of the table, and made in dumb show, with his two forefingers extended, the sketch of a pass with sword and dagger.

"The subtlest arbiter in all matters of honorable difficulty," cried another, older and grave. The encomium was capped by a youth with a court air about him.

"A most noted favorite, look you, of her Majesty. Her Grace liked above all things to be heard tripping Italian with the gallant signor. Ah, Her Grace knows a right proper man!" added he and smiled as one who has his reason for saying so.

"Aye, aye," commented mine host genially, glad to see the vexed question like to be settled by wag of tongue only, "and Master Vincent was likewise a friend of my good Lord of Pembroke."

"And I'll tell you more," interposed a raffish blade from the "Friars," much bedizened if somewhat out at elbows; "one who first put a rapier in Master Will Shakespeare's hand—one who was himself the butcher of a silk button (Oh, rare!) as Mercutio hath it in the play!"

Captain Strongi'th'arm's little fierce eye, which had mellowed under something like amusement, suddenly became fixed upon the doorway.

"Here come two as goodly youths," he asserted into space, "as I have seen since I landed. But, body o' me! whence do our honest English lads get knowledge of these foreign antics? In my time, an elbow in the stomach was the way to settle precedence if the portal was scant for two."

"Aha now!" exclaimed the gallant who was of the court, "these same antics, as you call them, are as a point of honor with all scholars of our lamented Master Saviolo, and all the more punctiliously observed by yonder pair that, from the friends they were yesterday, they have become rivals to-day."

"Say you so?" called out eagerly a young gull from the other side of the table. "How so, fair sir?"

"Why, 'tis the sole talk in Paul's Walk this morning. Have you never heard? Robert Beckett and Dick Wyatt are, by Signor Vincentio's dying wish, expressed to my Lord of Pembroke himself, to contend for the reversion of the Master's honors in the 'Friars,' aye and of the mastership itself at the Academy!"

All glances were turned toward the door, to gaze upon the two who had assumed so sudden an importance in the ruffling world. The question of courteous precedence had been settled and the shorter of the newcomers advanced into the room with a slow step and an air of gravity that seemed to sit uneasily upon his comely sanguine countenance. A goodly youth, broad-shouldered, sinewy, his bright brown eyes seemed made to match a flashing smile.

"Master Robert Beckett, a student at the Temple—good Kentish stock, sir," murmured mine host into Strongi'th'arm's split ear. "And behind him, sir, his friend, Master Wyatt."

"A tall galliard," commented the adventurer, "though less of a gentleman than your Templar."

"Aye, good sir," assented the other, still under his voice; "your perspicacity has hit in the gold. 'Twas a mere city 'prentice—till some good dame marked him for her heir, and dying left him rich."

"Master Vincent's two best scholars, Sir Traveler," here interposed a typical Paul's man, with long tooth and ragged lip, fixing on the veteran an aggressive stare and speaking loud as one in hopes of stirring up the drooping spirit of fight. These are the lads to take up with you for the fame of Saviolo's Academy!"

Under the insolent look, the old man's blood was fired again. He struck the table with his sound hand.

"Good lack!" he cried testily. "Saviolo! Saviolo! I've a surfeit of the name!"

As the words rang out, Master Beckett halted and faced the speaker. Then, with measured action, he unhooked his rapier and clapped it, still sheathed, on the table. Not brutally, mark you, but with that nice hint of declared hostility, as learned in the inner room of Saviolo's Academy, where the more recondite points of honorable quarreling were studied.

After which he sat down in silence, half facing this contemner of the revered master. Silence had fallen; even the drawer hung in the doorway to watch progress.

A gleam of new appreciation appeared in the veteran's solitary orb. For a while he gazed upon the Templar; then, slowly smiling, raised his tankard and saluted.

"'Twas right gallantly done, young sir," he said. "Don Lewis Pacheco de Narvaez"—Spanish pronounced with exaggerated lisp—"Don Lewis, who follows the footsteps of the great Carranza (mirror of cavalier perfection), never put the countercheck quarrelsome with better grace! You mind me of him, fair youth," he went on paternally. "Hast traveled, doubtless? Nay, I'll swear thou hast met him. None but your Castilliano, say I, to open a difference with the right martial scorn."

"Sir," retorted Beckett with some harshness, giving his beaver, as he spoke, a bellicose dent with his knuckles, "I claim no travels, and therefore no Spanish schooling. Nor have I known of a brighter mirror of honorable bearing than Master Vincent Saviolo, whose loss we are lamenting."

"Why, 'tis as the burthen of a song!"

"And this," the young man interrupted, of a sudden overboiling, "I am ready to maintain with disputation, and eke with my body, against any soldado or captain who will walk!"

"Well crowed for a cockerel, fair sir, since crowing there must be. Yet, mark me, somewhat too loud at first point of quarrel. Hast come to the challenge already—and upon a lie circumstantial only? And as for thy retort, it lacks, first, element. 'Nor have I known,' say you. How could'st thou know? Hast not traveled. Cockayne is fair enough—'tis not the world. How old are you, boy? Thinkest thou, because thou hast achieved fair London skill in thy rapier, could'st already have the whole art and mystery of fence under that saucy cap?—which same thou mayest as well remove at this stage, lad, for I will not fight thee."

"Nay, then, sir, 'twere fitter not to dispute when there is no readiness to prove."

The retort, given in a tone of doggedness, was capped dryly enough:

"Aye, 'tis easy for April to challenge December. Time was, look you, when I would have met this Saviolo in proper wrangle and disputation. Aye, I would have confuted his passes with suitable blade logic! Wilt fight me for thy teacher's sake?"

He stretched out his left hand as he spoke and laid it, not unkindly but with some authority, on Master Beckett's arm. Ere the lad could fling off the touch, he caught sight of the maimed stumps, and reddened.

"Aye," went on the old soldier resignedly, "that was my dagger hand, a halbert at the infall of the Pamplona palisadoes. 'Tis gone, fit for naught but the holding of a pipe, or the ringing of a coin! And without your dagger, these days, your rapier's best strokes in counter-time are naught. To such as me, your broad bilbo"—he jerked his thumb toward the basket-hilt that hung behind him on the wall—"is your only thigh companion. Plain cut and thrust; and the less occasion for it the healthier. For, in all fighting—as one of your mastery, fair sir, full well knows—he who trusts long to mere defense waits but to be hit. 'Tis the onslaught wins the duello; and to what manner of onslaught, think you, master, will this timber lead me against thy lusty legs?"

He hoisted himself from the bench, thrusting his figure into a burlesque attitude of fence; and it became plain to all that his right leg was naught but a wooden stump.

A murmur ran through the room, followed by a general shout of laughter; the old man struck at the wood with the knife he was brandishing and lumbered back to his bench. Then, after surveying the piteous makeshift for the missing limb with an air of melancholy philosophy, he turned his shrewd eye once more on the youth's abashed face.

"Time was!" he repeated, between a sigh and a laugh. "I be now but a hulk, towed into harbor at last, from long journeys, unfit for fresh cruises. But what though? A man may be no more for jaunty quarrels, yet he may speak. Ho, there! Thomas the drawer! Bring a quart of burnt sack; and put me a toast in it, and place it me by my young friend's elbow! Nay sir," he added with a kind of paternal authority, "but you shall have a nooning cup with me."

"Oh, sir!" cried Beckett, and his lips trembled upon words of regret that failed to form themselves.

The drawer had returned with the brimming tankard, the roast crab bobbing, a little brown island in the frothing amber of the burnt sack. The young Templar seized the cup and, pledging the donor with his frank glance, raised the draft to his lips. Then, removing his rapier from the table, further doffed his cap with pretty deference.

Dick Wyatt, who had watched his rival's behavior, fruitlessly racking his brain in search of some right proper cavaliero sally of his own, here followed the example, if more awkwardly, and sat down on the other side.

Strongi'th'arm looked from one to the other with benevolent interest:

"And so you two boys are rivals for the great prize?"

The glances of the two young men met. Blue eyes and brown flashed a second like blades; then, upon a common thought, were veiled with dropped lids, and both boyish faces colored deep.

"It was the Master's wish," said Beckett then. "He could not choose between us."

Wyatt tossed his fair curls with sudden defiance.

"'Twill be a rare sight, Master Traveler," quoth he, with not unbecoming arrogance. "Trial in the 'Friars' at Rapier Single, Rapier and Dagger, Rapier and Cloak, the Case of Rapiers, on the scaffold, under my Lord Pembroke's ordering. Ah, and under Her Grace's own eyes! We have six months to to be ready against the match."

And again the young eyes met.

Captain Strongi'th'arm cast round the table a glance of triumph; in spite of the counter-interest, he was at last the leader of the meeting. He chuckled in his beard, cleared his throat, and took the lead that was his due.

"Having heard you, sirs, there even comes to me a regret that I knew not this Master Vincent. (It was soon after the great year of Cadiz that I sailed from home.) God, no doubt, made him a good man, since the youth of England loved him so greatly. Nathless, what know you of other lands where cunning at tricks of point and edge is as common as potency at ale-potting among us? What know ye of lands where the long rapier is the true staff of life? For, hark ye, in these days, your signor, your don, and your mounseer finds a commodity of secret foynes better equipment in a walk through the town than the best-lined pouch. No gallant worth looking at that has not killed his man! Beyond seas, every captain of fortune and eke every private gentleman, if he weathers the thirtieth year unscathed, must needs be indeed a master sword. Aye, believe me, he who would set up as a master, let him have met abundance of cunning blades—not scores but hundreds! More to learn every year, north and south. If it be not in Antwerp, then in Milan or Madrid — Now where in England——"

"I marvel greatly, sir," put in a gallant, huffily preparing to rise, "at hearing an Englishman extol the foreigner's valor over his countryman's."

The veteran's eye lighted with a flash. He was about to make a scathing reply; but checked himself and resumed his didactic tone:

"Valor? We speak of fencer's skill, not of the soldier's fight natural, wherein (who should chronicle it better than I, Captain *Strongi'th'arm?) our English do excel* at push of pike and swash of good backsword. We speak of the duello; it has rules of bearing galore—aye, and surprises endless, as on any chessboard. And no man may say that he has encompassed them all. Great he may be, even as your dead Vincent—till a greater be found."

Eager, the circle now hung on the words. None more eager than the two young rivals, who had edged along the bench till they pressed the speaker on either side. Brown eyes sparkling, white teeth flashing, Beckett flung a breathless question into the first pause:

"Who, then, most experienced Captain, since"—dropping his voice in melancholy loyalty—"since our Vincent is no more, reckon you the true master of these days?"

The fine old wreck of venture was now fully launched upon the waters of garrulity. He turned his single eye toward the rafters, as if he could see painted thereon some vivid images of memory.

"Ah, who shall say?" he went on with gusto. "Not I, till I have seen all those who would be called masters brought together in one pit and matched as cocks are in battle royal. Aye, the talk is now of the peerless Narvaez of Madrid. Yet have I known others as magnificently spoke of. There is Petty Jean the Burgonian, look you—and the Seigneur St. Didier of Provence. And we hear of Caizo the Neapolitan and Tappa Milanese—and of Mynheer Joachim, best famed as the Great Almayne—and I have known Meister Eisenkopf, alias Mastro Capoferro of Bologna—a valiant! Valiant? They are all valiant as cocks, on their own ground! Ever, when I hear of a new mighty peck-and-spur, I marvel what would happen of the last, could they both meet on the same dunghill! I knew one, especially, of late—and, body o' me!—were I a youth again with limbs and eyes and blood fit for prowess; were I one of those that are ever readier with proof by stoccado than with word argument, with slap of cloak at the face than with sweep of plumed hat—" He struck Beckett on the shoulder with the mutilated hand, in friendly mockery, to emphasize his words and, at the same time, not to leave the eager boy on the right out of his amenity, gave Wyatt a sly thrust of his wooden leg under the table. Then he proceeded: "Were I one of your wild cats, say I, 'tis not to Don Lewis, nor to Thibault of Antwerp, nor yet to Cavalcabo of Rome that I would hie me—though Cavalcabo was a man ere he was slit to the heart by one Fabricius, a Danish gentleman, all about a matter of wager in fencing argument. To none of these, but to one like Maistre Todescan of Geneva."

Now, it was singular to note how, at this point, both the scholars flung a furtive glance toward each other, arrested midway, and modestly drooped again upon their can. Singular, too, the abstract air they assumed; and the tone of indifference in which Dick Wyatt presently asked:

"And what countryman was he, worthy Captain?"

The veteran who, lost in fond introspection, had been twirling his tankard to stir up the last drop of sugar, tilted it finally, smacked his lips, and was off:

"Would I could say of such a man-queller he is an Englishman! But no. They call him Todescan. Ho, ho! I once met a corporal in Piedmont they called Espingola, who was the longsword man of a German company! Now—an he and my Todescan were not within the same skin—but 'tis no part of an old soldier's work to rake up tales! So, Todescan, from Provence, and a Huguenot—let him have it so, I say!

"Anyhow he is a great man in Geneva, provost-of-arms, trainer of the town companies, accepted citizen. . . . Aye, aye, those long-head burghers, ever thinking of their ravening neighbors in the mountains of Savoy, have gaged the worth of such a man! Espingola was a good rogue, stuffed with fighting tricks as a brush is with bristles, and the simplest of them worth a Jew's eye. . . . Todescan sings psalms, hath no variety in his swearing, and holds an even prospect of not dying in his boots after all! And the youth of Geneva sucks knowledge out of him as a weasel sucks an egg! But," added the speaker slyly, as he marked the changing visage of the young Templar, "rest ye merry, masters, they are little likely to cross the silver sea to contest it with Saviolo's scholars for the succession of Saviolo's honors!"

Beckett rose suddenly.

"I cry you mercy, Captain," he said, taking up his rapier from the wall and slinging it briskly back to its carriages as if moved by a mighty haste, "I would we could invite you to a friendly bout on the scaffold; but since it can not be—Bellona having marked you too often for her own—why, then, give you good den, Signor Strongi'th'arm!"

The Captain rose upon his stump, made an elaborate congée, and stood, with good-humored mien, watching the young man salute his comrade and stride out of the door in right dapper deportment. When the last inch of the smartly cocked rapier scabbard, neatly draping a fold of the cloak, had disappeared round the corner, he himself called for his bilbo and cape; and as he flung the patched folds with noble gesture about his old shoulders, he found Dick Wyatt at his elbow.

"Ah, fare ye well, young sir," said he genially. "Shall ye take advice? Then, till your locks are blanched and rare, like these, never believe you have that skill, not only in your rapier play but in any art military, which is not some day to be caught in a trap. Now, I mind me, being in Genoa, the year of the great Barbary sailing, there was mighty talk of a new-fangle kind of firepot, and——"

"But, nay, good Captain, let me entreat you yet to one moment more of rapier-talk. An it please you, I would fain attend you on your walk home."

And as the clank of the lusty young spurred heel presently rang out past the open windows of the tavern, punctuated by the thud of the voyager's wooden stump on the cobblestones of Fleet Lane, the lingerers within the room could hear a boyish voice tammering upon the outlandish name: Todescan—Todescan of Geneva—Todescan of Geneva.

II

Thou art a traitor and a miscreant,
Too good to be so and too bad to live! . . .
With a foul traitor's name stuff I thy throat! . . .
What my tongue speaks my right drawn sword may
prove.

Shakespeare (*Richard II*).

IT WAS the eleventh of December by English reckoning—the twenty-second according to the new Gregorian calendar used in foreign lands—that Dick Wyatt, at a turning of the road by the elbow of a hill, came in sight of the goal of his three months' journeying.

Reining in his nag, he gazed. There was Geneva! It rose in the distance from the plain, severe within its bastioned walls; a few spires faintly gilt by the parting rays of the sun fast sinking behind the farther chain of low hills. There was something in the spring of the cathedral on its eminence above the black clustering roofs which brought back to his mind, with a transient pang of yearning, the outline of Paul's on Ludgate Heights, away in far England. In the forefront the Rhone bounded and roared, foaming in its southward race. Beyond the grim city spread the dark waters and the silence of Lake Leman. Beyond again, through the clear frosty air, against a darkening sky, towered the still gold and rosy snows of Savoy.

The sight, impressive enough, was specially welcome at the end of a day's ride through bitter weather and sore rough ways. As the traveler gazed, with eyes of satisfaction not unmixed with awe, a distant boom rolled through the still air.

Many experiences had Dick Wyatt gone through since he had left his peaceful island; among others the disastrous one of closed town-gates at fall of night. He spurred his tired mount, therefore; and it was with but a few minutes to spare that he reached the Porte de Cornevin and found himself inside the staid stronghold of Calvinism. Before being granted free entrance, he was suspiciously questioned by the sergeant of the burgher guard on his character, religion, and the purpose of his journeying—an examination which he passed with some difficulty, for French was still unready to his tongue. So soon, however, as it transpired that his business was with one Maître Todescan, the sour visage relaxed; he was not only admitted but sped on—any friend of worthy Master Todescan, Provost of the Town Companies, must be welcome in Geneva!

And so, all in the uncertain light of a Wintry orange afterglow, the last comer to the town found his way through the winding streets; past the old Castle of St. Gervais, by the Pont aux Mariniers over the thundering Rhone as it rushes out of the lake, across the isle, toward the steep rising Grand Rue, wherein—so had said the burgher sergeant—dwelt the great provost-at-arms, "at the sign of the Roy David, just a pistol-shot short of St. Germain Church."

Dick Wyatt, after the manner of men haunted by a fixed purpose, paid little heed to aught but what fell in with the main tenor of his thoughts. He marveled not at the prosperity of the noble Free City, at the orderly sober throng, the breath of peace that pervaded the place—unlike those airs of furtive merriment snatched between spells of disaster which marked the war-ridden towns he had recently passed through; he took scarce note of the houses, wondrous tall, showing at almost every floor a glow of fire or lamp that met you like a smile of welcome. But rather he marveled how a man of martial renown, such as the great Todescan, could find congenial dwelling among people where psalming and grave converse rather than the ringing of spurs and the cocking of beavers seemed the chief assertion of manliness.

And it made his heart leap, for all his weariness, as he halted at length before the Roy David, suddenly to hear, above the bustle of a hostelry at supper-time, the rousing clank of iron, the stamp of foot, the sharp cries, which tell of the fencing hour. The sounds proceeded from a row of windows on the first floor, lighted redly and wide open in spite of the great cold.

"So! Todescan at last!"

With an eager presentiment of all that he

—well-prepared scholar if ever there was one—was soon to learn under those projecting gables, Dick Wyatt entered the inn. Little did he dream how fast his knowledge would grow that very night!

Mine host of the Roy David appraised the newcomer with one look of an experienced eye.

"Aye—faith! There is still accommodation, though my house is all but full. And you would have speech with Master Todescan? And, faith, I thought as much. Though what there is in our Todescan that you all should thus—and another Englishman too! But I, for one, have no call to grumble. . . . And I may make bold to guess further, my gentleman, that you desire speech of Todescan even before sight of supper? Eh? Said I truly?"

And without more ado the traveler was conducted up a winding stairway to the door of the fencing-room.

'Twas a long, low, beam-ceiled gallery, covering the whole depth of the house from high street to back lane; lit with four oil lamps; bare of all furniture but for a couple of forms and an arm-rack in the corner. The last lesson of the day was over. A heavy-looking youth had just drawn on his doublet and was adjusting its points, ever and anon wiping his face and the back of his neck, spite the icy blast pouring through the windows.

"Maître Todescan," cried mine host from the threshold, all professional cheeriness, "again I bring an English admirer—one, too, mark you, that can not wait another hour before saluting you! What a man you are, aha! No doubt you would, as usual, partake of supper together? I leave you. But the time to toss that basket of trout into the pan and to carbonade a rib of that veal—say I well? Aye, and a pitcher of the white wine of Morges—eh? I know, I know!"

Without waiting for reply, he retired, leaving Dick Wyatt face to face with his great man.

The first impression was curiously unpleasant, and Dick was seized with an unexpected revulsion—a sense of resentment as against something unnatural. Every master of the blade he had known in his days, ruffian at heart though he might be, had borne about him the note of joviality. But here was a saturnine visage with a vengeance! An unformed thought quickly took possession of the Englishman's mind; in practise with such a one, cunning strokes of fence would assume a new purpose; would savor more of cruelty and treachery than of skill!

As a fact, Maître Todescan's face displayed anything but cordiality at that moment. It was with the air of him who finds his time trespassed upon at a decidedly inopportune moment that he turned upon the visitor, looking deeply at him. With an engaging glibness, cultivated on repeated occasions, the youth fell to explaining his presence. For a while Todescan listened in silence; then suddenly seemed to make up his mind to more graciousness. A smile found its way to his lips, without, however, reaching the eyes, that remained filled as with some dark and absorbing speculation.

He was honored. He would—on the morrow—offer his humble services to the gentleman. Now, he must go forth; he had charge to-night of the burgher guard's watch. But to-morrow. . . . He bowed. There came a furtive look into the close-set eyes. It was happy for the stranger that he had just saved the hour of the setting of the watch. The days were of the shortest. Had he encountered any noticeable experience on his approach to Geneva? Which road had his been? From the Bern side? Ah, from the north!

He stood musing for a moment. Well, he must even crave the young master's leave—until the morrow.

He spoke with a conscious air which betrayed the tardy grafting of courtly manners upon an original stock of camp brutality. And Dick Wyatt, escorted down-stairs, politely but firmly shaken off at the kitchen door, as he watched the fencing-master wrap himself up scientifically in his great cloak and stride out into the night, had a fantastic impression as one who has just passed by an unknown personal danger.

In some dudgeon, with lingering regrets for the merry taverns of Paul's Chains (oh, how far they seemed!), he consumed his trout and drank his thin wine by himself. And soon after, the melancholy drone of curfew having sounded from a neighboring tower, he wended his way dejectedly to the bare and very cold room allotted to him just below the eaves.

But under the combined influence of bodily chill, overfatigue, and mental annoyance, it seemed as though the soothing of sleep were not to be granted that night. After a few hours of angry tossing, the youth made up his mind to defy the curfew laws, struck the flint, and once more lit the small length of tallow allotted to him.

Geneva at last! . . . Three months since he had started from England, but a few days after that tavern meeting which had fired his young blood, and, throughout, the burden of his thoughts had been Todescan—Todescan of Geneva! A long and tedious way it had been, with more than one unpleasant adventure. Laid by the heels at Cologne through some pernicious fever; hindered almost at every step by his ignorance of tongues, of travel . . . But the goal was reached; Geneva at last!

Wrapped in his traveling-cloak, he began to rehearse the tale of his fencing knowledge, in preparation of the morrow's ordeal, when he should face, foiled rapier in hand, "the king of them all," as Captain Strongi'th'arm had dubbed this Todescan of Geneva.

After the manner of men enamored, living in dreams of their lady; of poets, haunted by rhymes and lilts and metaphors; of misers, with thoughts ever circling round their treasures (madmen all, in their degree), so this youth, on whom the meretricious newfangled rapier had cast her spell, had grown mad—mad as any lover, rhymester or harpagon; fencing-mad even as the Martius portrayed by Marston. No uncommon occurrence about these years! Not of lady's eyebrows or instep; not of dimples by rosy lips, ran his fevered thoughts, but of nattiest tricks with edge and point, of undiscovered wards of the swift blades, and of the deadly masters of swordland!

The few inches of candle supplied by the Roy David came abruptly to an end; the long unsnuffed wick collapsed, drowned its flame with a sizzle, and left him once more in darkness. Dick Wyatt was in that state of nocturnal lucidity of mind in which it seems verily as if sleep would never be known again in life. He remained as he was, sitting up in bed, gazing at some particular bright star that, between two gables, peered into the blackness of his room. In time the star progressed out of sight, and he had nothing left but to hearken to the all-pervading silence; that singular silence of an enclosed town buried in slumber on a night of frost when not even a prowling animal is about.

Into the stillness the tower-clock of a neighboring church dropped the stroke of one. The grave note reverberated with an odd emphasis; the pulsing vibrations hung lingering upon the air as if in warning. Strangely, the reminder of the hour appeared to break a spell. At first, to the musing listener, it was only as if that sense of death-like hush had departed. True, he could hear nothing; yet he felt as if, in the world around, were sounds that ought to be heard. Presently he realized that there was indeed something astir under the silent scintillation of the stars. Filled with an unaccountable sense of surprise, he sprang out of bed, and, standing tiptoe in the darkness, strained his ear to catch he knew not what. A moment later he had pushed open the casement and thrust his head into the cold night; a rumor without, very faint, intermittent, indefinable; into the midst of it, suddenly springing, human sounds; a sharp cry, pain or rage; a call; and then a shot, harquebus or pistol; another! Silence again, and now a clang that made the woodwork rattle. All was as clear to his mind's eye as if he saw; a culverin on the rampart had spoken. It was fight! It was a dead-of-night assault on the sleeping town!

The news began to pour like water from open sluices through the main ways. Drums, sharp and panting, ran north and west, checkering the night. One came drubbing up the High Street, and Dick bent out of his window to peer down. Nothing to be seen but a denser shadow in the dark, a faint whiteness—the skin of the drum. But out of the murk rose the cry, thrown out between the taps, strangled words from a throat out of all breath:

"*To arms! To arms! To the Tertasse—the gate is taken! The Savoyards!*"

Right and left casements clattered back; heads were thrust forth with much exchange of exclamation. Half-dressed men, many in naught but shoes and shirts, came hastening out of their houses, halbert or matchlock in hand, feverishly concerting as they scurried toward the west ramparts, whence the clamor upwelled. And presently, over all, the great bell of the Cathedral threw the clang and drone of the tocsin, lamentable, making the windows, the very rafters, shiver as if with terror in the dark.

Some new treachery of the ever-treacherous Ligue party—the ferocious mercenaries of the Duke of Savoy. . . . The sack of the town! . . . 'Twas a fearsome thing to contemplate—*Les Savoyards!* Awe-struck voices cried the tidings from window to window.

Dick Wyatt understood but one thing; and a new spirit awoke in him. He thrust his feet into his list shoes—no time to pull on long boots—buckled his sword over a still unfastened doublet, and groped his way down the black stairs into the street; the house door was open. His host, loading a harquebus on the steps by the light of a lantern which the half-clad handmaid held up, shouted something to him as he passed out—something he could not understand.

He found himself swiftly caught by the ever-increasing stream flowing toward the lower town. Men moved like shadows. Here and there a lantern made a narrow circle of light. More shirts, vaguely white in the all but complete darkness, were to be met than doublets or cloaks; many a foot went bare, to save that priceless minute of time at the rampart that might decide between success or massacre. With jaws firmly set on the thought of the coming death-struggle (aye, and on the thought of children and women!) none found breath to spare for words. A halt was called at last, at the entrance, squat, thick-pillared, of some monstrous cavern—or so it seemed to Dick. Pungent into the crisp air spread the smell of apples, onions, straw. . . . Ah, the Market Hall! A man sprang into the midst of them, out of the black. His voice rang; a soldier's voice, accustomed to command:

"Back! To the Bastion de Rive, every man! Every man, I say! The attack at the Tertasse is but a feint. The enemy is at the Rive Gate! That is where men are wanted! Back!" He ran, flinging out his arms; and the whole posse turned before him as the flock before the sheep-dog. The light of a lantern fell upon a harsh thin face, upon gleaming small eyes. 'Twas Todescan the Provost.

Dick Wyatt's soul leaped to the splendid mastery of the soldier in the emergency. Here was the champion in his right place; here the leader for him; here a gorgeous chance to take his first lesson from the terrible blade!

Upon the very spring of this elation fell a sudden chilling doubt. The last of the crowd had moved lustily up the narrow street once more, but Todescan had stopped short; and, with a stride to one side and a swift glance from right to left, he had dived down an alley. After a second's hesitation, moved by uneasy curiosity, Wyatt bounded forward in his wake, found the mouth of the entry, and noiselessly followed in pursuit.

The alley, narrow, winding, and all but closed from the skies by overhanging eaves, was pitch-dark. But the rapid, assured footsteps in front guided him and he was able to thread his way. At a turn of the lane a vague lifting of the gloom told of a more open space; and, against the lighter background, the black bulk of his man became perceptible. A vague yet overpowering suspicion caused Dick Wyatt to remain concealed. Todescan had halted. His steel cap, catching the glint of starlight, revealed furtive movements as of one peering and hearkening. Against the faintly luminous sky, a crenelated outline, cut high above, told the nature of the place—an inner patrolway at the foot of the town walls. The night all around was now alive with rumor, but this spot still held silence and emptiness. With a dart, like a serpent, Todescan suddenly stooped, and from under a pile of stones (as far as the listener could judge) dragged forth some heavy object.

Wyatt watched, held by the horrid suspicion that gripped him ever more sickeningly. Todescan was fiercely busy. There came a thud, as though the unknown thing that was so heavy and clanked on the cobbles as it moved, were being thrust against a door. And now, out of the darkness danced the red sparkle of flint and steel. A faint point sprang and remained aglow. Thereafter, more sparkle and then a steady fizzle.

Wyatt was no soldier, but he knew the quick-match and the little hissing fire-snake whispered of dire treachery. With his evil glimmer it kindled lurid understanding in his brain. An unguarded postern in the ramparts, a traitor behind it, a petard to blow the breach!

The young man's blood rose in fury. He drew his sword; his cry rang out incoherently:

"Oh, base and murderous! Treachery! Hold, rogue, traitor, renegade rogue! Help there! O sweet Jesu!"

The English words could be but sounds to the knave; but their clamor was eloquent. Todescan started, wheeled round; his blade leaped forth. The scintillation of the match cast the merest trembling gleam, yet he recognized the youth; and, cursing him blasphemously for an English fool, opposed his headlong attack with contemptuous yet vindictive mastery.

For a single moment, that yet seemed, in its tension, to pass the bounds of time, as Wyatt found himself under the glare—felt rather than seen—of those sinister eyes that from the first had struck a chill to his soul, the full realization of his madness swept upon him. He was challenging to the death the world's greatest swordsman; all his own science served but to emphasize his sense of appalling helplessness. But, even at the first meeting of blades, the misgiving vanished. His spirit rose to exaltation, stimulated by the very feeling of his opponent's superb authority. His sword seemed to be less combated than taken possession of; stimulated, too, by the low chuckle that Todescan gave. The utter scorn of it—so might a demon laugh in the dark, exulting in the power of his own soul!

Upon a singular trick of the imagination, as in the flash of a vision, he was once more in the old fencing-room of Paul's Chains, in the "Friars"—there rose the great yellow windows looking Thamesward, the paneled walls, the hacked pillars—and there, over the point of his own foiled rapier, the kindly, keen face of his revered master, of Saviolo, the mirror of chivalrous courtesy. Hark to his voice, admonitory yet encouraging:

"*Eh la!* point in line, *figlio mio;* ever in line! And ever lower than the wrist! Lower—lower, good lad! Thumb down, and up with the little finger, elbow out, nearly straight! So—and I promise thee, ne'er a blade in the world shall surprise thy ward!"

As if in obedience, he swiftly fell into the well-practised expectant guard. Even as he did so, there was a jerk—it was almost like an exclamation of wonder and disappointment—in the steel that pressed on his own; and Dick Wyatt was back again, fighting for his life, the Genevan cobblestones under his feet, the glimmer of the quick-match and its steady hiss—frightful menace!—warning him to haste! He gripped the ground in his soft shoes (a blessing it was he had not waited to don the great boots!). He set his teeth. Never, for one breathing-space, did the terrible long-blade release his own. He felt it gliding, seeking to bind, fiercely caressing—the deadly spring behind a tiger's crouch—felt the invincible unknown thrust ready against the first weakening. And that weakening was coming apace! It was all he could do to hold his opposition. As a kind of spell, cast by the fingers of steel and the superhuman flexibility of his opponent's wrist, a palsy was creeping up his outstretched arm. And one twitch of relaxation, he knew, and he was sped!

Now, whether from the depth of his own need, or whether the spirit of the master were hovering over a beloved scholar in his dire extremity—who shall say?—certain it was that the very tones of Saviolo were now recalling to Wyatt's brain a favorite axiom of the fence-school:

"*Chi para, busca; chi tira, tocca!*" (He who parries, only seeketh; he who thrusts finds!)

It was to the youth as if a flame had been lit in his soul. Why wait in anguish to parry a coming secret thrust, when he could still himself strike? Up he sprang; brain and eye, wrist and nimble feet in magnificent concert. To his dying day, Dick swore that, for the instant, he saw in the dark, even to the dreadful grin on the face opposite to him. His ear, strained to the same marvel of keenness, caught the sound of a catching breath—not his own. Exultant, he thrust; out went Saviolo's favorite *botta lunga sopramano!*

It was on the very dart of Todescan's stroke, which leaped out like a bolt from ambush—but one splinter of a second too late! Todescan's own pass: the fierce, jerky binding, the incredible turn of the wrist inward, the infallible estocade that was to have driven the point irremediably under the armpit and let free the overweening soul that dared oppose him in earnest! There was a sinister grating of steel, and the edge of the menacing blade glided, harmless, by Wyatt's side; but his own rapier, driven straight, heart-high, went home. Todescan, caught on the start of his own lunge, actually ran upon the point!

At any other moment, the horrible ease with which his steel traversed living flesh would have sickened Dick Wyatt, but now there was nothing but fierce leaping triumph in his blood; the great gaunt figure had stopped dead-short. A broken curse, a groan ending in a long sigh, and the Provost of Geneva fell at the feet of the bewildered London apprentice, whose bright blade was now black to within a foot of the hilt.

"Master Vincent Saviolo—have thanks!"

cried the youth and waved the victorious weapon at the stars. Even as he did so, a drop falling from it glittered, a dreadful red, in the light of the quick-match. "My God!" he called out, upon a new thought; flung the good sword from him, and was down on his knees, tearing like one possessed at the last inch of the burning rope.

The urgency of the peril, for he had no mind to see the fruits of his great combat thrown away, lent a desperate sureness to his effort. In another instant he had sprung up again and was stamping the last spark under foot. Then he stood and breathed deeply, feeling dazed, almost as in a dream.

Hemmed in by the rumors, this little square under the bastion was still wrapped in stillness—a stillness that suddenly grew awful to Dick as he thought of the dead man. It was the first time he had sped a soul. In the cant of rufflers, this was "his first man." Yonder black heap—that was he who had been Todescan, a name Dick had never spoken but with bated breath!

The sight of torches bobbing at the far depth of the wall lane, the sound of running steps and voices uplifted, startled him from his mood. With a sudden vividness he saw his own peril. To be found alone with the corpse of the honored Provost, near the telltale petard and the remains of the quick-match, he, a stranger just arrived in the city, without a single friend, without even speech to explain or defend himself—his doom as spy, traitor, and murderer would be trebly sealed! He hastily picked up his rapier, and made a wildcat spring up the steps that led to the battlements, reaching the black shelter of the platform only just in time.

There, although prudence urged a noiseless flight along the walls to some farther quarter of the town where, unnoticed, he might mix with the throng, he was fain to sit down and gather strength, for shaking knees and laboring heart refused service. He dropped on the sill of an empty gun embrasure, and listened. Within the walls the steps and voices were drawing near the spot where the body lay. Outward, beyond the moat, stretched the fields under the starlight. Frogs were croaking with strange persistence. All at once the lane below him was filled with new sounds, exclamations, hurried steps, a clang as of a falling pike. Impelled by a desperate curiosity he crept back to the edge of the platform and looked down.

Luridly illumined by the glare of torches, he could see a party of disheveled, anxious-faced burghers, a score or so of them, armed with harquebus or halbert, clustered together. One rushed, cursing, from the petard at the postern to the body of Todescan. Another was shaking his fist upward as to some unseen enemy. Dick was preparing to crawl to some safer hiding-place, when it was borne in upon him, to his utter astonishment, that the slayer of the Town Provost was already vindicated. Little French had he, true, but his wits were sharpened by danger and deed and by his knowledge of the truth in this matter. One, who seemed to be the leader of the party, was speaking, emphasizing his words by vindictive thumps of his clinched hand on his palm:

"He sent us to the Bastion de Rives—there was no enemy there! That was his treachery! Todescan has betrayed us—but God has avenged!"

And deep-mouthed, thrice repeated, came the words:

"Todescan the traitor!"

Dick Wyatt straightened himself with a long sigh of relief. Yet he deemed it still best play to withdraw unseen from the neighborhood of these hard-pressed, excited men. Stealthily he wiped his blade; and, in disgust, flung the bloody kerchief over the wall into the ditch.

Instantly he was struck by the singular cessation of the obtrusive frog-croaking. He paused a moment, wondering. Then, as though the throwing of a kerchief had been an expected signal, from the darkness without a muffled call came up the wall:

"*Eh, is it you at last, Espingola! Are you ready?*"

At once one of the words evoked the memory of old Strongi'th'arm: "a corporal in Piedmont they called Espingola"—had said the old man of travels; and he thrust his head through the embrasure and peered into the moat. Yonder, in sooth, huddled at the foot of the rampart—in their black armor, darker shadows upon the gloom—lay a party of the Savoyards.

Boyish Dick forgot his wise resolution; all thoughts of safety, of self-preservation, evaporated. He sheathed his rapier and rushed back boldly to the platform's edge.

"Ho, there, my men!" he shouted in sturdy English to the party that was, even then, hastily moving on. "Here, here! The enemy is yonder!"

All torches were lifted, all heads looked up in astonishment. He pointed and waved vehemently, and summoned a scrap of their language to his tongue:

"*L'ennemi! l'ennemi! Là—là!*"

Rapidly the burghers lined the parapet. Those outside who had expected a secret ally to beckon from the breach were confronted by defenders. Stealth and silence were of no further avail; the Savoyards upsprang. The harquebusade began.

THE story of the escalade of Geneva has become matter of history. Widespread in all Protestant countries has been the bitter tale of that night surprise, treacherously planned in the midst of proclaimed peace. And all who heard of it know how nigh the vile plan came to fruition; how narrow, for one panting hour, remained the margin between victorious repulse and annihilation; what nameless orgies of blood, lust and rapine were, by the Duke's explicit orders, to follow on the shout of "*The city is taken.*"

Once indeed that cry of terror was actually raised, to strike ice-cold to many an innocent heart. And no doubt it would have been justified, had all the concerted measures of assailants without and confederates within come to their expected issue—of which the most pregnant was the blowing up of the forgotten little postern under the Bastion de l'Oye!

But as yet Dick Wyatt knew naught of all this. Toward the fourth hour of the morning when the last gun on the south walls had vomited its last shot at the retreating enemy; when the Savoyard army had vanished into the darkness whence it had sprung, the young man, sitting on a heap of rubbish, exhausted, dazed with fight, had not yet plumbed the mystery of the night's monstrous doings. He had had a glut of sword work; not, indeed, of the subtle fencing tricks of his dreams, but of furious strokes, by mere fighting man's instinct, all in the light of nature; here falling on morion or corselet, there roughly warding a push of pike. The struggle was over; but about him turmoil was still seething. The whole town was in the street, yet in the midst of the throng he was in solitude. Each in the crowd was moved to exultation or thanksgiving, to lament or solicitude for friend and kin; but he had no friend among them; none thought of dropping him a word of kindness. By the light of one of those street fires that had been kindled wherever possible until the opening of the blessed eye of day, he was sullenly attending to sundry slight wounds that now had begun to stiffen and smart. A morose depression gathered upon him.

A hand was clapped on his shoulder:

"Why, Dick Wyatt! Hast also come to Geneva?"

He had not heard the beloved tongue from a true English mouth these weary months. His heart leaped. He sprang up. Oh, marvel! No less a man than Master Beckett! Master Beckett torn in attire and powder-stained; mocking, yet with a tender gleam in the eye. Their hands met.

"I have looked for thee, Dick, among the dead, the maimed, and the sound, and here art thou at last!"

"How now—yet you knew me not here?"

"Nay, an hour ago I never dreamed of Dick Wyatt. But down yonder, at the Tertasse Gate, where the croaking frogs were made at last to choose between jump the wall again or take our steel, there was one burgher—a tall man, by the mass, but yet he owed something to the timely help of my rapier. 'Grand mercy!' saith he. 'You English are rude escrimeurs' (thus they call a fencer, Dick); 'we left one on the Bastion de l'Oye. He hath little French, but he drummed right heartily on the black harness of the Savoyard.' 'An Englishman?' says I. And there being no more work to do I looked for him who had little French lest he want succor or friendly word, but never thinking of thee! What make you from Lombard Street, Dick Wyatt?"

"Aye—and what make you in Geneva from the Temple, Master Beckett?"

The retort was made smiling. Gone was melancholy; gone, too, was the rivalry that had burned sore in each heart against the other. They stood, eye in eye. Presently they both laughed; the same thought was in their minds.

"So! In truth they did speak of another Englishman," said Dick.

"'They' spoke, say'st thou? Who spoke?"

"In Todescan's fence-room," said Wyatt gravely.

Master Beckett mused a moment. "When came you to Geneva, friend Dick?" he asked.

"Yesterday, at nightfall."

A great astonishment writ itself upon the Templar's countenance.

"Last night! Plague on thee, Dick!" he went on banteringly as he marked the other's enigmatic smile, "but thou wast in monstrous haste! Well—come. 'Tis fair time to go crack a quart for a morning draft; or so at least 'twould be in London. Todescan?" he chuckled. "I have news for thee, Dick. But come."

Arm in arm they made their way to the nearest tavern; and there, seated at a retired table, with a stoup of warm wine and a white loaf between them, resumed converse. "'Twas venturesome of thee, Dick, to come seeking knowledge so far," quoth Beckett.

"You came as far, methinks," was the good-humored retort. Dick Wyatt had never felt himself a match for his rival in words. But at this game of friendly mockery he held to-day the highest card in reserve.

"Aye, so," said the Templar lightly. "But with me the enterprise was less. I have a gift of tongues—and friends in the university. 'Twas easy. But since start you did, 'twas a fault not to have started sooner—I do assure thee," he added with meaning. "I left on this quest it comes nigh three months since."

And then, with gusto, did he relate the story of a long pilgrimage of fence. Marvelous were the names falling sonorously from his tongue; every master mentioned by Captain Strongi'th'arm, and some others to boot. But it was anent his stay in this very city that he waxed most eloquent: Todescan, traitor or no, had proved the archmaster, the demigod of the blade!

"Aye, Dick, 'twas pity thou camest not sooner! Canst scarce, now, learn the 'thunderbolt of Todescan,' this invisible sudden death that laughs at plate or gorget. Canst indeed never learn it—save, of course, from me, when the time is ripe."

"Save from you, Master Beckett?"

"Yes, Diccon, save from me. The secret died to-night; Todescan was killed on the walls!"

Master Beckett, not unnaturally, attributed to disappointment the silence in which his rival received the news.

Dick Wyatt was reflectively rubbing his chin. For one brief instant he had burned to cap, by an obvious, crushing retort, his friend's ill-concealed exultation. But he now resolutely folded his lips upon his secret—telling himself that, in Beckett's own phrase, the time was not yet ripe. Since they were yet to meet in friendly contest of skill, he would reserve the story of the momentous duel until the moment of victory—for, of a surety, on the day of trial he would be met again by this thunderbolt of Todescan, and how could he doubt now that he must prove victorious on the lesser as on the greater issue?

Assuming all the air of one who knows he has been checkmated, he changed the drift of the talk.

III

SOME three months later, on the very morning of their return to London, Dick and Master Beckett together sought the Bolt-in-Tun. They passed through its portals—this time with never one of your elaborate tricks of courtesy as to precedence, but the taller with his arm on the other's shoulder—and found the old place humming, as on the day when last they had seen it, with the talk of a death—a death of far other importance even than that of Master Vincent. England's great Queen had passed away; ill filled was her place by a little, ungainly Scot.

The comrades were greeted with a shout. 'Twas six months since they had been seen in Ludgate. Queries assailed them on every side; but, by tacit agreement, they kept their own counsel. True Englishmen, whose prowess was so soon to be tested in loyal public contest, they had no mind for boasting of knowledge acquired, after the fashion of your tavern-haunting gull. But, at length, so much leaked out: they had been preparing, each after his own fancy, for the great day of my Lord of Pembroke's prize-playing, in honor of Saviolo.

It was Beckett dropped the information—a trifle loftily, perhaps, from the height of his traveled experience. He thought to impress his stay-at-home friends. The announcement was met, first by silence, in which eyebrows were raised and glances exchanged; then out broke a hubbub—banter, mockery, condolence. Poor lads! these long six months preparing! And here was one who knew, from knowledge certain, that public prize-playing would never more be seen in Merry England!

The one who knew (from Whitehall he) spake: His new Majesty loathed swordsmen's shows, and forbade them. He could not look on a blade without shudder. Nay, if he had to knight a man, he must needs avert his eyes so doing.

Dick and the Templar stared at each other. Were the friendly rivals glad or sorry? They scarce knew. Dick took a deep breath.

And now, from the head of the table—his place by rights it seemed to have become—up spoke Captain Strongi'th'arm. From the moment he had recognized the young men, he had remained watching and listening in unwonted silence. His single eye was more commanding than ever. He tapped the table with his two fingers, and there fell a stillness in the room. He spoke of kings and of her who was gone: of Mary of Scotland and of many instances he had known, at home and abroad, of men like the new King James, her son, frighted for life before their birth by a woman's terror. Then, from Jamie's horror of a drawn blade, came he to talk of fight and prize-playing and the like—thence to his darling theme: the great Masters of the Sword, alive or dead.

"Aye, young masters, you may have had your snippets of travel; but had ye known the tall men, the great days! There was Cavalcabo, mark you, the mighty Italian; but he is dust. Now, the nearest to him, in subtilty, was Eisenkopf (of Mainz in the Palatinate). He, for all his High-Dutch name, was from the south also: Capoferro was he . Now the Eisenkopf had a certain thrust he called *Pigliafilo*——"

"I know the trick," said Beckett, over his can.

Captain Strongi'th'arm raised an eyebrow.

"Yet, to my mind," he went on, unheeding, "ne'er so great a man at the rapier—that is, for the single duello—as Petty Jean, in Paris. He it was devised the *botte de Nevers*——"

"Aye"—from the Templar again. "Petty John taught it well. But he teaches at Lyons now."

The Captain's eye rolled a little redly upon the fair, cool youth; 'twas scarce wholesome, for one of so few years, to know so much, to be so sure of speech. He must be set down.

"Ha, but only when a man has measured blades with Thibault of Antwerp, Thibault, the heritor of Carranza's own science, all by mathematical logic, squares and tangents to the circumference"—he kept his eye severely upon Beckett, as the young man showed signs of opening his mouth again—"or eke with Meister Joachim of Strasburg on the Rhine, whose lesson was rhythmic and required for its mastery the lilt of fife and taber.—I mind me of a plaguy round-cut he would engineer on your extended arm, that he had christened *estramasson de Manchette;* it would do for you, by neat rapier-slicing, what the Spanish dog's halbert did for this hand, at the palisado of Pamplona——"

"Saving your experience, good Captain," interrupted Beckett demurely, "you mistake. *Estramasson* is the Sieur Thibault's own device, by rule geometrical. I have practised both with him and with Master Joachim."

The veteran's gathering testiness exploded. He rapped out a parcel of rare outlandish oaths and spluttered the name of Todescan. Todescan, to his mind, the very angel—the very devil of the sword! Who had not faced Todescan of Geneva knew naught of finality in fencing. Todescan's noted thrust——

Here, once again, was Master Beckett's moment to insert (with pardonable pride) the story of his acquired gains in far Geneva. He parted his lips to speak, his brown eyes sparkling, his frank smile flashing.

But, subtly, in a delicate, insinuating voice that dropped into the brief moment of silence allowed by Captain Strongi'th'arm's pause for breath, Dick Wyatt forestalled him:

"Todescan, aye—of Geneva. And his noted thrust: at the armpit, on a binding of the blade, thus—" He made a spiral movement with his extended wrist, and glanced for one instant slily at Beckett's amazed face. "Todescan of Geneva—'twas I killed him. Yea"—and this was addressed more specially to Captain Strongi'th'arm—"ran him up to the hilts, with Master Vincent's own *punta riversa!*"

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Being Some Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer

by

Captain George B. Boynton

EDITOR'S NOTE—Captain George B. Boynton is not the creation of a writer's imagination. His exploits have many times been fictionized, but the man himself is real and still living, though now settled in quiet city life after half a century of thrilling activity. Even yet more than one foreign Power takes pains to keep carefully informed of his exact whereabouts, for he has been one of those who, as revolutionist, filibuster, blockade-runner, counselor of South American dictators, soldier of fortune, has a hundred times shown himself an elusive element to be reckoned with in the great game of world-politics. He has served, all told, under eighteen flags—in Europe, the West Indies, the Caribbean, North and South America, the China seas—everywhere and anywhere that mankind was at war and there was promise of excitement and adventure. His life has furnished much material for fiction, but now, for the first time, Captain Boynton tells his own story, its truth attested alike by internal evidence and affidavit, and fiction pales beside it. For several months ADVENTURE will publish adventures, each complete in itself, from the career of this Master Adventurer.

EUROPE

RUNNING THE AUSTRIAN BLOCKADE

AFTER settling up with Nickell on the Don Carlos expedition I devoted myself for a few months to legitimate commerce, dividing my time between London and Paris, where I opened a branch of my mercantile and shipping house at 30 rue Vivienne. Just before the Franco-Prussian war began I bought three cargoes of wines at Bordeaux, sent them to London, and sold them later at a good profit.

During the brief war, which ended in the capitulation of the French at Sedan, September 1, 1870, I had three ships busy with honest cargoes, but I did not get a chance to do any contraband running until just before its close.

The Austrian army was then being re-armed with an improved rifle, and thousands of the old guns were stored in the arsenal at Vienna. Nickell had bought a lot of them at a bargain, but Austria would not release them without a guarantee that they would not be used against Germany. I was led to believe I could sell five thousand of these rifles to the Committee of Safety at Bordeaux, so I bought that number from Nickell and, with an order for their delivery, went to Triest in my little steamer, the *Leckwith*. Charles Lever, the novelist, was then the British consul at Triest, where he died a year or two later.

On the pretense that the arms were for Japan and that I would be able to establish that fact within a few days, I secured the removal of the guns from Vienna to the Triest arsenal, a few hundred yards from the dock. However, to get them over that short distance and then to get away with them was a problem that puzzled me.

I was mulling over it one day in a café when a maudlin young Englishman, who was sitting at the table with me, pulled out a passport, all plastered with red seals and wax in the old Continental fashion. The instant I saw it an inspiration seized me. I became the most jovial of companions and plied the Englishman with wine until he fell sound asleep.

Then I took the passport from his pocket and hustled off to the arsenal. I had been assiduously cultivating the officers there and was delighted to find in charge of the guard the young lieutenant with whom I was best acquainted. I told him I would have the order for the release of the rifles within an hour and proceeded to celebrate by getting him into the same state in which I had found the convenient Englishman.

I sent word to Lorensen, sailing master of the *Leckwith*, to get up a full head of steam, and engaged a dozen big wagons to be at the arsenal in an hour. I arrived with the wagons, waved the gaudy passport in front of the young officer's face and, without trying to read it, he told me to go ahead. We made quick work of getting the boxed arms to the ship and under her hatches, for the guard was changed at four o'clock and my sleepy young friend would be succeeded by an officer who was sober and in his right mind.

We were not quite fast enough, however, for, just as we were pulling out, the new officer of the guard came running down the dock, shouting that he wanted to see the order for the release of the arms. As he was well out of arm's reach I made a fussy effort to hand him the passport. Then I opened it out and showed it to him, all the while explaining that it was all right.

He went away shaking his head, and I anticipated trouble at the fort at the entrance to the harbor, at the head of the Adriatic, as the channel through which we had to run was narrow. The fort occupied a commanding position and had high walls from the water's edge, with a free bastion high up.

Sure enough, a shot whizzed across our bows. Immediately I swung the ship in, and before they saw I was not going to come to anchor, as they had supposed, we were so close under the walls that they could not bring their guns to bear on us.

It was only a very few minutes, however, until they could reach us with their seaward guns and they let go at us without any delay. The second shot took a bite out of the mainmast, and it looked as though they had found our range and would smash us in a jiffy, but the brave little ship was tearing through the water at her top speed and, as she was going directly away from them, was hard to hit. Shells splashed uncomfortably close to us for a few minutes, but, save for one shot that carried away some of the gingerbread work on the stern, we were not struck again, and were soon out of reach of anything like accurate aim.

The arms were rushed to Bordeaux and turned over to the Committee of Safety only a few days before the Battle of Sedan. I was sufficiently enthusiastic in the cause of France to land them without a proper guarantee of payment, and, in fact, they never were paid for. Everything was turmoil, so after waiting a few days I placed the bill for the arms with an attorney and hurried on to London, *en route* for Venezuela, where I expected to find more excitement. I placed the *Leckwith* and my ships in the hands of Nickell & Co. for charter and took the first steamer for New York.

SOUTH AMERICA

AMONG VENEZUELAN REVOLUTIONS

THE first word that reached me on my arrival in New York near the end of September, 1870, was that my wife, who had sailed ahead of me, was seriously ill at her old home in Illinois. I went to her at once and remained at her side until the end, three weeks later.

When I returned to New York after the funeral I was greatly depressed and was in a mood for anything that offered excitement. A few days later I met Frank (Francis Lay) Norton. Knowing each other by reputation, we soon became friends. Later we became partners in some of the most gloriously exciting exploits in which I have been fortunate enough to participate. Norton was a natural born pirate, and he looked the part. He was then about forty years old, five feet eight inches tall, thin and wiry, and possessed of remarkable strength. His eyes, hair, beard and mustache were as black as coal. You could feel his eyes looking through you and would almost lose a realizing sense of what was in your mind; it was not hypnotism or mental or physical dominance, but he could almost read your most secret thoughts. He was perfectly irreligious, cynical and cold-blooded. Under the most severe tests a slight twitching of his eyes was his only sign of excitement. He was daring to the supreme degree, but never foolishly reckless, and I don't believe he ever experienced the sensation of fear. He was, too, as he needed to be, almost a dead-shot in off-hand firing with rifle or pistol, and an expert swordsman.

When I first met him he was wild about the China Sea, where he had spent several thrilling years and made several fortunes, but I had heard so much of Venezuela and of Guzman Blanco that my heart was set on going there before I undertook to explore any other strange lands. The upshot of our many discussions was that I sent Norton to London to take command of the *Leckwith* until I was ready to join him, when it was agreed we should go out in the yacht to his beloved China Sea.

After Norton's departure I bought the small fore-and-aft schooner-yacht *Juliette*, fitted her out at New London, Conn., for a six months' cruise and started for Bermuda to test her seaworthiness, with Lars Lorensen as sailing-master, formerly of the *Leckwith*, and a brave and loyal Norseman. Guzman Blanco was not at St. Thomas, so we went on to Curaçao, always a revolutionary rendezvous, and there, in the latter part of December, I met Guzman and General Pulgar, his chief of staff. Guzman, after many exciting political and military ups and downs, was planning an invasion of Venezuela against the Monagas faction, then in power.

After he had studied me, asked all sorts of questions and apparently satisfied himself that I could be relied on, Guzman told me, in a general way, of his plans and asked me to secure for him 3,000 old Remington rifles and 500,000 cartridges and deliver them as quickly as possible at Curaçao.

Some two months later I arrived at Curaçao, where, instead of Guzman Blanco, I found General Ortega, who was with Guzman when I first met him and seemed to be fully in his confidence. Ortega handed me a note, bearing what purported to be the signature of Guzman, which directed me to deliver the cargo at a place to be indicated by Ortega, and stated that payment for it would be made on my cabin table. I showed the signature to two men who knew Guzman well, and both pronounced it genuine. I had no suspicion that anything was wrong and took this precaution simply as a matter of ordinary business sense.

Ortega directed me to deliver the cargo at Tucacas Point, about one hundred miles west of La Guayra, and, on arriving, Ortega went ashore and returned with a request that I order off the hatches and start the unloading of the cargo in my boats and then go ashore with him and get my money. This was not in accord with my contract with Guzman or with the note Ortega had handed me, but I had great confidence in Guzman and did not wish to offend him. As soon as the unloading was well under way I went ashore with Ortega. We climbed the bluff and walked half a mile inland to a mud-thatched hut before which a sentry was pacing. Ortega gave the countersign and we stepped inside, to find General Pulgar, who was chief of staff for Guzman when I was introduced to him, wrapped in a *chinchora* and smoking in a hammock. He explained evasively that he was there instead of Guzman, but when I asked him for my money, he smiled and straightened up.

"I told Ortega to deliver that message to you," he said, "but there is no use mincing words and I may as well tell you that you are my prisoner. Your cargo is being taken care of and will be put to a very different purpose from that which you expected, As I have said, you are my prisoner, but I have an offer to make you. It can't make much difference to you whether you serve Guzman or me. If you will join my forces I will make you a colonel and give you command of a battalion, and when the revolution is over I will pay you for your rifles, just as Guzman agreed to do."

"You seem to forget," I replied, "that I have a contract with General Guzman."

"Well, you don't appear to be in a very good position just now to carry it out, do you?" he asked.

I again inquired where Guzman was, but a shrug of the shoulders was the only answer I could get to questions along that line. Not knowing so much about Venezuelan revolutions then as I did later, I could not fathom this strange situation to my entire satisfaction, but it was my guess that in some way Pulgar had become arrayed against Guzman, and it turned out that I was right.

I told Pulgar that I would give him an answer in the morning, and spent the night with Ortega, under guard. I tried to draw him out, but, evidently according to orders, he would not even talk about the weather.

At sunrise we went to see Pulgar. When asked for my decision I inquired what the result would be if his revolution failed.

"Then I am sorry, my dear Captain, but you will lose your cargo, while I will lose my life, which is of infinitely more importance to me. But the revolution will not fail!" he vehemently declared.

As though impressed by his confidence, I announced that I would accept his offer, with a mental reservation to escape at the first opportunity, for I did not propose to fight against Guzman.

"That is excellent," he said, with the suggestion of a bow. After coffee I went with him to inspect his troops. He had about 3,000 men, many of whom were already armed with the rifles I had brought in, and they were strung across the narrow arm of the peninsula in a line almost as ragged as their clothes. I was formally given command of a battalion of 300 men, and an Indian servant, who, I afterward found, had orders to shoot me if I attempted to escape, was assigned to me. I accompanied Pulgar back to his headquarters, where I was given an old sword and the tarnished shoulder-straps of a colonel, these constituting my uniform.

"Now that you have allied yourself with my forces," he then said, "you will have no use for your ship. You will therefore write a note to the officer in charge, directing him to proceed to Curaçao and await orders. She will be safe there and," with a quizzical smile, "you will be safe here."

As there was nothing else for me to do, I complied with it at once. It was cutting off my one only forlorn hope of rescue, but the adventure was getting into my blood and, to tell the truth, I rather liked the idea of being left to my own resources amid such strange surroundings.

I had been trying for about a week to whip my lazy, ignorant troops into some sort of shape, when word was brought in one morning that "the enemy" was approaching. We had no advance guard out, though I had tried to induce Pulgar to post one, and, a few minutes after the scouts had been driven in, the action became general, with the forces apparently about evenly matched in numbers.

Instead of allowing me to lead my battalion, Pulgar ordered me to remain with him on a little knoll in the rear, from which he made a pretense of directing his forces. He could have accomplished much more in front, for what his men needed was a leader, not a director. They were fighting in Indian fashion, with every man shooting indiscriminately from behind a tree or log, and they paid no attention to commands.

I will say for them, though, that they fought hard and stubbornly, but they were gradually driven back, and Pulgar, who had a terrible temper, was furious. All at once the opposing troops were largely reenforced and came with a rush which quickly converted our orderly retreat into a rout. Pulgar, cursing like a madman, dashed into the disorganized mass of his liberty-loving louts, with Ortega and the rest of his staff at his heels.

I was left alone and was hesitating as to what I should do, when my Indian servant tugged at my trousers-leg.

"Follow me, Colonel!" he said. "I know where there is a boat."

He started off at the run and covered ground so fast that I had to gallop my horse to keep up with him. He led the way to the beach near where my cargo had been landed and pushed a native boat from under a clump of mangrove trees. We jumped in and shoved off in a hurry, for Ortega and several of his men had just appeared on the bluff above and were making for us.

There were no oars in the boat, but we pulled a board loose from the bottom and used it as a paddle. A strong current from the east swept us clear of the peninsula and out to sea, but I was not alarmed, for I figured that we would soon be in the path of coasting vessels. Scattered rifle patter reached us for a long time, indicating that my former comrades in arms were being ignominiously chased around in a way that must have been most discouraging to Pulgar. Toward the middle of the afternoon, as we were trying to work in toward the land, the Indian let our paddle get away from him, which left us entirely at the mercy of the elements.

We drifted around for three days and

nights without so much as a glimpse of a distant sail and without an ounce of food or a mouthful of water, save only such as we were able to suck out of our clothes after a providential rain the second night. On the morning of the fourth day a fog lifted, and close to us was a fleet of fishermen from the island of Oruba, twenty miles to the westward of Curaçao. They took us to their island, and after we had rested and eaten for two days a fishing-boat took us to Curaçao.

There I learned from Consul Faxon what had happened in Venezeula. Guzman's plans had worked out more rapidly than he anticipated, and he landed in Venezuela early in February at the head of a small force, but with a large army waiting for him. With only slight resistance he entered Caracas and proclaimed himself dictator. His victory was so easily achieved and was so largely a personal one that he did not give to Pulgar the reward to which he considered himself entitled, and Pulgar immediately started a new revolution.

WHEN I told Faxon how I had been imposed on and impressed into Pulgar's service he advised me to tell Guzman the whole story. I went on the next steamer, which also carried a letter from Faxon, in which he told Guzman the precautions I had taken to verify the signature to the order Ortega had given me.

I called on Guzman after I knew he had received Faxon's letter and was welcomed with marked cordiality. "Tell me your whole story," he said, "but let me assure you it is believed before it is told." His face took on an ugly look when I told him how Ortega had tricked me with the forged order, and he interrupted me to say that he had sent an officer to Curaçao to await the *Juliette* and direct me to deliver the arms at La Guayra. This officer's failure to get to me in advance of Ortega had not been satisfactorily explained and had, Guzman said, been severely punished. It was evident that he suspected collusion between his agent and Ortega.

When I had finished, Guzman told me he was surrounded by men whom he either suspected or hesitated to trust. He wanted a man whom he could rely on implicitly to watch for evidences of treachery among those around him, and he was kind enough to say he thought I was the man he had been looking for. He asked me to remain in Caracas for an indefinite time, to mix freely with his followers and ascertain who could be trusted.

I accepted his invitation gladly, and a part of the time that I was in Caracas I spent at the Yellow House, the residence of the President, as his guest. Guzman was the handsomest man I have ever known; tall and as straight as a sword, with long black beard, and dark eyes sharp as needles. He was magnetic and winning to the last degree, and every inch a ruler of men, without the faintest notion as to what fear meant. During the nearly twenty years that he was absolute ruler of Venezuela his temper was the thing most dreaded through all the land. I have seen grizzled generals, descended from the best families of old Spain, turn almost white at the sign of his anger.

Himself a pure Castilian, he regarded the native Venezuelans as a vastly inferior race, thereby furnishing another illustration of his good judgment, and there was much of contempt in his attitude toward them. Many times, when they had incurred his displeasure by a display of cowardice or some other fault, I have heard him abuse a quailing crowd of the highest officers in the Venezuelan army in language much more vigorous and profane than an American policeman would use to a gang of hoodlums. "You are not worth a ——," he would always tell them in conclusion, "except in proportion to the amount of foreign blood that is in you!" Yet, until the day when he was treacherously overthrown, to the great loss of Venezuela, no criticism of his was ever resented, nor was there ever a whisper of protest. The people knew their master.

Not more than ten days after my arrival in Caracas Guzman asked me to be in his private *sala* at ten o'clock the next morning, to meet an old friend. At the appointed hour the Governor of the Casa Publica came in, with a few officers, escorting none other than General Vicento Pulgar, who had put to his service my cargo of arms. Pulgar was in full uniform and bore himself like a hero. His manner was almost contemptuous and his expression was one of amused curiosity rather than fear.

Guzman made him a courtly bow and extended his hand, which Pulgar reluctantly accepted.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," Guzman said.

"I dare say it is to you, General, but here I am, at your service."

"I hope you are here as a friend?"

"Whatever General Guzman desires must necessarily be accepted as an accomplished fact.

Guzman turned to the Governor and asked him the occasion for the call. The Governor replied that they had brought General Pulgar as a prisoner of war.

"Prisoner!" exclaimed Guzman with profound astonishment. "My friend General Pulgar a prisoner! If that is the purpose of your visit, you may retire."

After the officers had departed Guzman turned to Pulgar with a more serious air. "You will be my guest in Caracas until such time as I need you elsewhere," he said. "I will be pleased to receive a call from you every day."

Pulgar bowed; no other parole was necessary.

That was Guzman's way of doing things and it was well understood, especially by men of intellect like Pulgar. No firmer hand than Guzman's ever ruled, but it was ordinarily encased in a velvet glove. His bare hand, displayed only when extreme conditions demanded, was a sign of terror.

As Pulgar was leaving, he stopped and congratulated me on my safe trip to Caracas. I thanked him with the same politeness. Neither of us alluded to his seizure of my arms or to my enforced service with him. Pulgar and I subsequently became good friends.

I congratulated Guzman on his diplomacy and his shrewd effort to turn a powerful enemy into a useful friend, though I doubted that he would succeed.

"If I and my good adviser, Captain Boynton, can not pull the claws of General Pulgar, we will have to take the consequences," he said. From that I understood that I was to keep close watch on Pulgar and report daily, which I did.

Everything that I saw and heard indicated that Guzman's diplomacy would fail. Pulgar told his friends openly that while Guzman seemed very friendly he was not deceived and would kill him at the first opportunity. "Well, he'll have plenty of opportunity!" said Guzman with a laugh when I reported this to him.

There was a reception at the Yellow House a few nights later. Pulgar was invited and was present. Guzman soon found an opportunity to engage him in conversation. "I have already found that being President of Venezuela has its objectionable features," sighed Guzman after they had chatted for a few minutes. "One has to listen to so many ridiculous tales. For instance, I have heard many foolish stories about you, one of them being an alleged threat to kill me the first time you have a chance."

"I don't know about the others, but I did say that," replied Pulgar.

Guzman shrugged his shoulders, as though wearied. "How often," he responded, "we say we are going to do things which we may think we will do, but which we never do do!"

"Whenever I get an opportunity that a gentleman can take advantage of I intend to kill you, General Guzman," said Pulgar, still smiling.

"Let that be the understanding, then," answered Guzman as he walked away without displaying the slightest concern.

The very next day Guzman sent Pulgar an invitation to come to the palace at three o'clock and go driving with him. Contrary to his custom he ordered that no guards accompany them. They had not gone a quarter of a mile when one of the front wheels came off and both of them were thrown out in a heap. As they disentangled themselves Pulgar drew a revolver, but it was not well out of his pocket before Guzman had him covered with his pistol.

"Ah, you were prepared for me I see, General," said Pulgar.

"I am always prepared for friends and enemies alike," replied Guzman.

They put up their weapons and walked back to the palace.

"I am sorry our ride was so short," said Guzman.

"It was long enough," was Pulgar's reply, "to convert an enemy into a friend."

"In that case it has been truly delightful," responded Guzman. They shook hands, and that was the end of the Pulgar revolution.

IN THE CARIBBEAN

A BETRAYAL AND A VENGEANCE

I HAD been with Guzman Blanco for about a year after he proclaimed himself Dictator of Venezuela, February 14, 1871, when I began to grow restless again.

This was in no sense due to any fault I had to find with Guzman. He had treated me with every mark of friendship and had proved, time and again, that I possessed his entire confidence. But under his strong hand things were settling down to a humdrum, and with my whole nature clamoring for a change to more strenuous scenes I put the situation up to Guzman and secured his permission to go away, on the promise that I would return within six months. I summoned the *Juliette* from Curaçao and set sail for England, for the double purpose of securing a cargo of arms with which to add to the joy of living in Central America, and of looking up Frank Norton, who had so well planted within me the germ of his China Sea insanity that it was taking root. With the good little ship heeled over to the steady trade winds that fanned my dusky cheeks lovingly, as I fancied in my enthusiasm, and with the waters that are nowhere else so blue murmuring a welcome back to them, I was again a rover of the sea, and my exultant soul joined in the lyric chorus of the rigging.

We stopped at St. Thomas, that haven of thieves, blacklegs and revolutionists, and there I met General Baez, brother and Minister of War to Buenaventura Baez, the President of Santo Domingo, and one of the most interesting characters the romantic West Indies have produced.

It will be of interest to Americans that, in the latter part of 1869, when he happened to be president instead of exile, he signed two treaties with President Grant. One was for the cession of Samana Bay, which probably is the most beautiful harbor in the West Indies and was wanted by our Navy Department for years before these treaties were signed and for many years afterward. The other was for the annexation of the whole island of Santo Domingo to the United States. The people of Santo Domingo approved both of these conventions at an election decreed by Baez in February, 1870, and held under the guns of an American warship, but the United States Senate refused to ratify either treaty. President Grant believed strongly in this annexation, wherein he showed his farsightedness, and a commission which he sent to the island reported, in the Spring of 1871, in favor of the treaty, but sentiment in the Senate was decidedly against it and the measure was not pressed.

The defeat of Grant's annexation project gave Pimental and Cabral an excuse for starting a new revolution, and they were beginning to show their hand when I ran into General Baez at St. Thomas. He knew of my association with Guzman Blanco and at once approached me with a proposition that I go to Santo Domingo to aid his brother in the troubles he foresaw. I told him that, if I could get an extension of leave from Guzman, I would consider any practical plan that promised excitement.

We went on to London, where I learned that Norton was in the Mediterranean with the *Leckwith*, impatiently carrying general cargoes. I left word for him with Nickell & Son that I expected soon to be ready to go out East with him, took on a cargo of arms and headed for Costa Rica, where I had information that a revolution was hatching against General Tomaso Guardia, who had recently come into power. For this trip, I remember, I took the name of Captain John F. Kinnear. We had some trouble in getting away, for the British Government was still dead-set against filibustering, and in the hope of removing all suspicion I gave our destination as Kingston, Jamaica, though I had no idea of stopping there. I gave the ship a new set of papers, showing British registry, and was, of course, flying the British flag.

We ran into bad weather in the Caribbean and were forced to put in at Kingston, after all, leaking badly. The ship was so opened up, in fact, that she had to be recalked and have a few new planks, which necessitated putting her in dry-dock and taking out our cargo. I had the work hurried with all possible speed, for the mail ship from England was due in nine days after our arrival and I was fearful that she would bring an order for our detention, which, as a matter of fact, she did, as I learned years afterward.

When the repairs were completed the Governor of the Island refused to allow us to reload our cargo, as he had an intimation that the ship was not what she pretended to be. This hint, it developed later, came from Jimmy Donovan, a "sea lawyer," whom I had shipped at the last minute in the hurry of getting away from London. He made what is known on the sea as a "pier-head jump." On the fourth day I prevailed on the Governor to allow us to take on our cargo, but he insisted that the ship must be held, with both anchors down, until further orders. I decided that we would go out that night. Knowing me as well as he did, Lorensen laughed incredulously, thinking I was joking, for the channel through the harbor was shaped like the letter S and commanded by a fort which could, as he said, blow us out of the water without half trying.

"Just the same," I said, "we are going to sea or to hell to-night."

"All right, Captain, but it will be to hell if I am any judge," was the quiet reply of the game Lorensen, than whom a braver or better seaman never walked a deck.

During the evening he greased all of the blocks so we could start on our problematical journey without any noise. The moon went down at midnight, and before it was out of sight we had one anchor up, with a muffled capstan. We were getting up the other when the harbor policeman came along. A few Bank of England notes blinded him and we got under way, with two of the ship's boats towing us and the tide helping us along. Evidently the fort had orders to look out for us, but we caught them napping, apparently, for we were almost past it when we were hailed and ordered to stop.

The next minute, without giving us a decent chance to heave to, even had we been so inclined, they whanged away at us. The second shot went clear through us, just below the waterway, and Lorensen, who was with me at the wheel, exclaimed grimly, "Here we go, Captain!"

But he was mistaken, for in the darkness their gunnery was not up to the standard of British marksmanship, for which I have a wholesome respect. They kept at it hard enough, but all of their shots went wild, except for one that punched a hole in the port bulwarks forward, though from the way the shells whistled I have no doubt our canvas would have been punctured many times had it been up.

We were soon under cover of the Myrtle Bank Hotel and after that two ships protected us until we were far enough away so that only a chance shot could reach us.

At daylight I had the carpenter at work fixing up the little damage the fort had done us, and it was well that we were quick about it, for during the afternoon we met the old warship *Bellerophon*. We were preparing to salute her when she stopped and hove us to with a blank shot. I don't think I have ever been more surprised, for there was no wireless telegraph in those days, and I could not conceive how she had got word that we were suspected of filibustering.

While I was racking my brain for some solution of the problem, Lorensen ran forward, leaned out over the side and came back and reported that there was a blue shirt under the bobstay. That explained it, for in those days it was an unwritten law in the British navy that when a sailor on a merchant ship had any pronounced complaint to make, regarding either his own treatment or general conditions on the vessel, he would hang a shirt in the chains, under the bowsprit, where it would not be seen by the officers unless they were looking for it, as a signal to any warship they met that there was something wrong on board.

Whenever and wherever a warship saw a shirt fluttering under the bobstay the vessel was held up and carefully investigated.

I suspected at once that it was Jimmy Donovan who had hung out the shirt and I had him bucked and gagged and stowed away in the hold. Then I made an entry on the log which showed that he had been left in the hospital at Kingston with pernicious fever.

By that time the Lieutenant from the *Bellerophon* was alongside. When he came aboard I assumed a look of injured innocence and profound surprise. He ordered me to muster the crew aft and called for my papers. To my great satisfaction he merely glanced at the certificate of registry, which was forged, and centered his attention on the crew-list. The men answered to their names as he called them off. When he came to Donovan I explained that he had been taken sick at Kingston and left there, and produced the log, which satisfied him.

"Who among you has any complaint to make?" he asked of the men. There was no response, and he repeated the question.

"Don't be afraid," he encouraged them. "The *Bellerophon* will protect you. If you have any complaint to make, step out and make it. We will see that you get fair play and, if necessary, take you on board."

No one moved and, after waiting some time, the Lieutenant turned to me with the remark that everything seemed to be all right. I told him I had heard of no complaints from any of the men and asked why they had "stood us up."

"Why, there is a shirt out forward," he

explained. I suggested that perhaps some of the crew had been washing. Hearing my remark a quick-witted fellow named Bill Johnson, who had shipped on my first trip with the *Juliette,* stepped out and said he had washed his shirt that morning and hung it in the chains to dry, without knowing that it meant anything. "I've been a sailor for a good many years, but that is one signal I never heard of before," he said.

"Is that true, Bill?" asked the Lieutenant with what seemed like just a shade of suspicion.

"It is, sir," replied Bill with the steady gaze of an honest man.

"He is a 'True Bill' all right," I told the young officer as I shot the grizzled sailor a grateful look that meant a raise in wages. "He is the oldest man on the ship, and one of the best. That shirt signal is a new one on me, too, and I thought I knew all the signs of the sea."

"Very good, sir," he replied. "It is quite evidently a mistake."

He then returned to the *Bellerophon,* which answered our salute, and we squared away for Costa Rica. My mind was free from any further fear of capture, for a stiff breeze was singing over our quarter, and I knew by the time the old warship could get to Kingston and start after us again we would be well out of reach. As soon as she was hull down I mustered the crew aft and complimented Bill on his ready wit and rewarded it. He was with me for a good many years of service after that and was never known by any other name than "True Bill."

I then reminded the men that, in accordance with my invariable rule when running contraband, I had told all of them the exact nature of our voyage before we were out of sight of land and had offered to set ashore any who did not wish to undertake it, while those who stayed with me were to receive double pay and a bonus out of the profits in addition, in consideration of the hazardous and strenuous nature of the trip.

"Therefore," I told them, "the treachery of Donovan has not only endangered your extra pay and bonus but also placed your freedom in jeopardy. As he was one of your number I will turn him over to you for such punishment as you think his case deserves. I, of course, reserve the right to review your verdict, but I do not believe you will be too lenient with him in your judgment."

The crew welcomed this announcement with cheers, which could not be regarded as a good omen for the traitor, and a court-martial was organized, with the bo's'n at the head of it.

Donovan confessed when he was brought before the court, whereupon it was unanimously and speedily decided that he should run the gauntlet and be marooned. This verdict I approved, for I believed it to be none too severe.

The crew prepared for the first ceremony by knotting a lot of rope's-ends and tarring them until they were as hard as iron, but flexible. They then formed in a double line running the full length of the ship, and, as Donovan ran down the middle of it, they laid on so well that he was leaving a trail of blood before he tumbled in a heap at the end.

He was then placed in the brig and kept there until we came to a small island off the Costa Rican coast, on which he was landed with enough water and provisions to last him a couple of weeks or more and a flag that he could use to signal any vessel coming his way. There was not a great deal of travel down that way in those days and he may still be there, doing a repetition of the Robinson Crusoe act, though the island was not very large and the boat's crew reported that they saw no goats. Donovan was helpless from fear and begged for mercy, but that was something our cargo did not contain.

The arms we carried were sold to the revolutionists in Costa Rica, being paid for partly in cash and partly in coffee, which I sold at Curaçao. From there I returned to Venezuela and reported to Guzman Blanco, after having been away only about four months.

AFTER Guzman's successful campaign against the rebel Pulido, in which I served on the staff, I received another letter from Baez urging me to come to Santo Domingo. The same mail brought a letter from Baez to Guzman, asking him to grant me leave of absence for a few months to enter his service. Guzman was flattered by this request and with his permission I went to Santo Domingo City in the Spring of 1873, on the *Juliette.*

THE WEST INDIES

A REVOLUTION AND AN ESCAPE

PRESIDENT BAEZ of Santo Domingo was short and thin and had a washed-out look, as though his skin had been faded by chemicals instead of by a three-quarters admixture of white blood. He had large, full eyes that were shifty and insincere. He was clever, but superficial, cunning and treacherous. Had I seen him before I went to his cursed country, to reorganize his army and aid in putting down the growing revolutionary sentiment, I would have remained in Venezuela or gone elsewhere in search of adventure, for he looked a coward and provoked distrust. I had heard of him only as a good fighter, but that reputation I became convinced, soon after my first visit to the "Palace," had been earned for him by his former friends and supporters and was in no sense the work of his own sword, at least so far as recent years were concerned.

The "army" was, in reality, not much more than an unorganized body of densely ignorant natives who, as practically the only compensation for their supposed loyalty, were allowed to carry guns which they did not know how to use. I taught them how to march without getting in each other's way, how to handle their arms without shooting themselves, and as much discipline as they were amenable to, but I fear my efforts did not go much beyond that, even though they did effect a decided improvement. The revolutionary spirit seemingly having subsided with the improvement in the army, I took the *Juliette* to Halifax, N. S., in the Summer of 1875, to have her decks strengthened and mounted with rapid-fire guns. We returned early in the Fall to find that the smoldering revolution had burst into flame and that a large force was marching on Santo Domingo City. The President and his brother were vehemently but vainly advising each other to be brave when I reached the Palace.

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" demanded the President as I entered the door.

"It strikes me that it might be a good scheme to fight," I replied, with no attempt to conceal my disgust at their attitude.

"Yes, yes, but where?" queried the trembling Chief Executive.

"Go out and meet them," I advised. "They probably will not be looking for us, as I judge that would be a departure from the established Santo Domingan method of warfare, and we may be able to take them at a disadvantage."

"No, no!" urged the panic-stricken Minister of War. "Let us wait until they get into the city and then bombard them with your guns!"

"Which would mean," I said, "killing four or five of your own people to every one of the enemy. I am not used to that way of fighting."

They told me there were about 3,000 men in the attacking force. We had more than 4,000 men under arms. The city had no defenses worthy the name, and I insisted that the thing to do was to go outside and fight it out in the open. The President, who had apparently regained a little of his nerve, agreed with me and, against the continued objections of his brother, we went out to meet the attacking army.

General Baez commanded our center and right, while I commanded our left flank. With the firing of the first gun he began to give way before a force that was inferior in both numbers and discipline, and fell back so rapidly that before I realized it my command was flanked and almost cut off, with the sea on one side of us and the enemy on two others and rapidly closing up the fourth. My men fought surprisingly well until they suddenly discovered that they were almost surrounded, when they promptly went into a panic. Most of them dropped their guns and ran for the city with an activity that I had not dreamed they were capable of, while nearly all the others, in regular South American fashion, about-faced and joined the rebels on the spot.

In a few minutes I was captured, along with about a hundred men who were so numbed by fear that they could neither run nor fight and had not enough discretion to join the enemy. I was furious over the cowardice of Baez and put up the hardest fight I was capable of, with the satisfaction of putting six or eight blacks on a permanent peace basis, but, with my revolver empty and my sword broken, I was overwhelmed by the inky cloud. General Baez galloped back to the city, and he and his bewildered brother, the President, had barely time to board a small schooner and sail for Curaçao before the capital was in the hands of the rebels. General Ganier d'Aton, a tool of Pimental and Cabral, was at once proclaimed President and hailed by the populace with the customary acclaim.

Instead of being killed at once, as I had expected, I was taken to a small fort on a hill near the town where, on the altogether false charge that I had fomented trouble and brought on civil war, I was tried by drumhead court-martial and sentenced to be shot at sunrise. The verdict was, of course, dictated by revenge, and execution of it was delayed because they wished to gloat over me for a while.

This was a little the most serious predicament I had ever been in and, with the idea of taking every chance that was open to me, rather than with any distinct hope that it would be answered, I gave the grand hailing-sign of a powerful secret order which I had joined while in Caracas. I thought I saw a sergeant raise his eyes, but, as he gave no further sign, I concluded that if there had been any movement it had been one of surprise and not of recognition.

I was placed in a large *sala* with windows opening on the courtyard, and blank walls on the three other sides. The windows were barred and, after satisfying myself that they were secure and that there was no way of escape, I lay down and smoked, reflecting that if my time had come there was no way of interfering with the program scheduled for the break of day.

The soldiers were drinking and celebrating their victory with shouts and songs, which lessened in volume and vehemence as the night wore on, but two sentries, who paced back and forth in front of my room and met under one of the windows, religiously kept sober. Now and then a drunken coterie would press their dirty faces against the bars to hurl at me denunciatory bursts of Spanish eloquence, to which I vigorously replied, but these enlivening visits grew less and less frequent as the consumption of *tafia* rum increased.

Along about three o'clock, just as I had about made up my mind that in a couple of hours I should be due to start on an indefinite exploration, I heard a short scuffle at each end of the path the sentries were patrolling, and a gurgling noise as though a man were choking. The next moment Lorensen's voice came softly through the door:

"Are you in there, Captain?"

I assured him that I was.

"Stand away from the door!" he said, and I obeyed the order with pleasurable alacrity.

Three blows with a log of crutch mahogany, taken from a pile in the courtyard, smashed in the door. Lorensen seized my arm and, led by the sergeant who had, after all, recognized the sign I had made, we climbed down a declivity back of the fort and made our way to the shore, where two boats were waiting for us.

The smashing in of the door of my prison aroused the drowsy guard and we were hardly well out of the fort before there was a beating of drums and loud shouts from the few half-sober officers. They finally mustered a detachment which was sent in pursuit of us, but they were not in a condition to move rapidly and did not reach the shore until we were a considerable distance away from it. They fired a few shots in the general direction of the sea, but as we were in no danger of being hit we did not raise a gun.

When we got out to the *Juliette* I heard the story of my deliverance. The sergeant, whose name was Alexandro, had understood my signal. He went into the city as soon as he could get away from the fort and, by persistent questioning of the natives, finally ascertained that I was in command of the American ship lying in the harbor, for I had not hoisted the Santo Domingan flag on the *Juliette*. He then rowed out to the ship and, after telling Lorensen what had happened, through a member of the crew who could speak Spanish, offered to lead a rescuing party to the place where I was confined. He said it would be comparatively easy to get me away, as only a small body of troops had been left at the fort—the supply ot rum in the city being much larger—and they would be helpless from drink by that time.

Lorensen, being a member of the same order, could well understand why a white man would take the deep personal interest in my welfare which Alexandro had manifested, but he was suspicious that the negro was seeking to lead him into a trap. He decided, however, to take no chances, so, after warning Alexandro that he would be the first man killed if he attempted any treachery, he went ashore, with sixteen well-armed men, six of whom were left with the boats while the others proceeded to the old fort. They surprised the two sentries at the opposite ends of their beat, throttled them and, as the surest means of preventing an outcry, cut their throats, which accounted for the gurgling noise I had heard. Then they broke in the door of the *sala*, and were obliged to make enough noise to arouse the guard.

Such are the obligations of a great secret order.

As soon as it was day I sailed close in and bombarded the fort where my execution was to have taken place. There was a great helter-skeltering of rum-soaked braves, but some did not get away, and the crumbling walls buried them. Then we headed for Venezuela after an experience that had paid me only in excitement.

Several years later I met General Baez again in Murphy's Hotel at St. Thomas, but did not see him until he took a good-natured shot at me. The bullet smashed a pile of dishes on the arm of a waiter ten feet away from me and, from the start he made, possibly he is running yet around the hills back of Charlotte Amalia.

At Caracas I found Guzman had been elected President. He was inaugurating public improvements, and induced me to go upon a wonderful journey of exploration up the Orinoco through the unmapped interior of Venezuela. After a six months' river journey of 2,000 miles, we reached Manaos, Brazil, on the Amazon, that great river and the Orinoco having a common source. From Manaos we sailed to Rio Janeiro and from there to England on the *Elbe*, commanded by Captain Moir, commander of the *Trent* when Mason and Slidell were taken off. On the way I wrote a full report to Guzman, promising to return within a few years. At London I joined Frank Norton to start for the China Sea.

(*Other Adventures of Captain Boynton will appear in the next number.*)

The Flies in Amber

by Robert Dunn

I FIRST mentioned this story on the Sourdough beach, to the crowd of us miners that had landed there before the stampede. The line of talk we had under way drew it out.

We had been arguing about that sentiment you find in the North—the miner's hate of any creature with a white skin who lives domestically with an Indian.

Lots of such outcasts—squaw-men—fished and traded in the creeks about there, and our oratory was bitter. In a country like Alaska, our hard life along with the Indians' shiftless ease sometimes makes you think that a struggle is on to see which race will come out on top. Yet we know just how good a Siwash is. He's a hero at facing danger, has Christian honesty till we corrupt him, and we've all fought his battles against the blows and sneers of Chechawkos. Our respect for him in his place is as big as our hate of him out of it, for a squaw's father and brothers are beasts, too, when a white man rules their shack.

The beach knew that I had been Gail Cresset's partner and had found him in a bad way some Winters before in a valley of the Tordrillo Mountains, which rise out of the Kuskokwim tundras six hundred miles inland from Sourdough; but no details how or why. Out of respect for Gail and the other person concerned, I had never told everything. But as both were then out of Alaska for good, their interests couldn't be prejudiced by a clean breast.

Gail at that time was a clean-skinned boy of twenty, born in Alaska, who had taken his medicine with starving rations and Wintering alone. He hired out for the Summer as horse-rustler to a scientific outfit going to explore the Kuskokwim. Their cayuses fought mudholes and mosquitoes for two months, till one morning in late August a pinto mare back-trailed from camp. Gail started to track her, and though no man was cuter to the tricks of the tundra, it fooled him as it has others as wise. Lost he was, and with no gun.

He prowled about three weeks, the yellow moss sucking away strength and courage, sour blueberries cheating him with hopes of surviving, till he felt he was starving, not being hungry any more. Specks would float before his eyes, which he knew were caribou prancing in the distance, and he would wave a hand at them and laugh, as a man does when he's flattered.

One day he came out of the timber. Across four miles of moss and ponds rose the foothills in a string of shiny black cones. And there, perched in a valley over the gray thumb of a glacier coming down from the big peaks behind, was a cabin with smoke rising from it. On he crawled over the stones of the river boiling out of the ice, to find the shack new and fitted up for three prospectors, but empty, staring empty! Still, he got at a pan of bread on a bench, brewed tea, and, when he felt himself again, explored about. Outside he saw footprints in the moss and followed them back along the shelf above where the glacier is just a hell of gravel cones. And soon the sight of a human figure stopped him as he ran.

It was a woman, bending over in a ragged coat. In one hand she held a narrow white band, in the other a thick disk. Always facing the ice, so that Gail saw only her back, she walked slowly toward him from the edge of a pond. Every moment she stooped, paying out the tape-line, measuring the moss yard by yard. And when she reached the boulder by his side, she stood up straight and bareheaded, her black hair scattered over her shoulders, and, shading her eyes, gazed out on the glacier, throwing forward an arm as if to choose some object there.

Gail choked his wonder and remarked in his quiet way that he guessed that his carcass was the first she'd ever saved the life of. She dropped her reel and grew stiff to the muscles of her neck. She told him to go away, get out, quick! But he had begun his hard luck story, so she listened and he saw the fear die away from her eyes, till she cut in and said, "No pity here," and sighed.

When he was done, she brightened up. "Then you must be a scientist, so you can tell me. How fast do glaciers move?"

Gail gave her that queer, gentle smile of his, and said she had him bad, but that he'd heard them say—nodding to his outfit down in the timber—that some glaciers move thirty feet a day, some forty, and faster in the middle.

"I've been measuring," she went on, pointing to a boulder that hung at a ticklish angle from a cone of ice. "That rock out yonder was thirty feet nearer the mountain yesterday, and that would mean that by next March, the bodies——"

"Look y' here. *Whose* bodies?" cut in he solemnly.

"My husband and my father are buried in that glacier. Down in the ice, like flies in amber," she told him. "Flies in amber. And I'm waiting here for the ice to give up its dead—until they come out at the moraine—so I can give them a decent burial. I will wait forever, if I must."

Gail stared at her and whistled, being such a savage. Then with a warmth in his heart he never felt before, he seized her hand and said, "Poor girl!" and asked her why the men fell in. She told him how the three of them had prospected along the face of the range; how flies had killed their horses, forcing them to camp till snow came, and they could draw enough grub on hand-sleds to reach the Tanana. But the day the cabin was finished the two men left her without a word. She tracked them up the glacier to the edge of a crevice. There the snow was all beaten down, and no tracks went farther.

"They was good friends?" the boy asked, frowning—"had had no words between them? Prospectors don't fall like rocks into crevices. What reason had they to quit you? They took no grub? If they've left you here to starve, by God——"

"No, no!" she told him quickly. "There's a year's grub for three in the cabin. But their guns are with them."

"Bad enough without that, too," said Gail, thoughtful. "And you was the last seen them alive? What suspicions have you?"

She studied him awhile, and answered: "I couldn't tell you why they went up there to die, even if I knew. Don't ask me. Never, never, talk of this again, I beg you!" and she began to cry.

Gail started to speak, but she was hitting back toward the cabin. And he followed her.

GAIL knew nothing of "good" women, having seen none, and with the buckskin-trousered sort that sell whisky from sled and saddle he had never improved his chances. Yet what you might call instinct told him that the girl's weathered little face was pure, and he must treat her like she was his sister. He did, though for a week they hardly spoke. She put him off when he tried to cheer her, seeming so taken up with thought of the dead. She cooked, and Gail built himself a bed and shelter with logs and slabs left over from the dead men's carpentering.

He knew that before they sledded out they must live as if they were alone on the moon, seeing no eyes but their own, each hearing the pitch of no other voice. He knew his veins were young and his blood warm; that she was young, too, and in distress. But he was the sort that thought more than he ever said; and at first he fell in the ice—what she knew about it and did no more than wonder how the men wouldn't tell.

So, as they ate, or playing piquet by the slush-lamp at nights, they would just remark on their tally, or how low the sourdough was in the box. And if she softened as she looked across the table at Gail and those high cheek-bones and that snow-tanned skin of his, she never showed it by one blush. Nor did Gail let on, so he said, how the widow's peak on her rumpled forehead, where the hair grew low, seemed each day to belong to a different woman, whom he must learn to know and respect and be decent to all over again.

He had never been in love. He was only half sure what love was. But what man needs to be taught?

So he began to be happy, just thinking of the wait with her till snow came. It seemed that two young ones like them couldn't help being drawn together. All his life up to date became a blank—the fake stampedes he'd all but died on, rows with squaw-men—and he forgot the mystery why her folks died, and overlooked her loyalty to them and what she'd said about staying near the glacier till the bodies should come out. Only for fear of scurvy, he would have looked forward to living there with her the long Winter through, though he knew that the white darkness and the dark snow and the stillness like the inside of a glacier cave, aren't good for the minds of two strong men. But he never even saw the chance of this, since, with no guns and no fresh meat, scurvy was sure to take them. So he built sleds and snowshoes for the trip out, and hauled wood from the timber to keep the stove going.

Meantime October had come. The first snow sugared the hills, melting fast so that they looked like polished jet.

It was a night about the middle of the month that Gail saw the first sign of her sorrows letting up. Their hands did no more than touch over the cards after supper. Gail said hers burned him, and she was slow in drawing back her fingers out of his, and turned her head away. That was all, but he jumped up, excited, and walked up and down the floor.

Some photographs had been tacked in a sort of oval to the logs over the red blankets of her box-board bed. One, he had always noted, was of a big Siwash buck. He stopped before them, and, only half knowing what was in his mind, he said, "Good face that Siwash has."

"You think so?" she answered him, and her voice seemed to come from miles and miles away. "I think so, too."

"And this old white man," he went on, picking out the picture of an old miner with gray hair, "seems like an old-timer." And then, quite forgetting himself. "He was a squaw-man, eh?" he asked her.

"He was my father," she answered him steadily, catching his eyes.

Gail came to and hated himself, trembling and all hot. He thought he might as well have struck her. He was clean out of his skin, but all he could say was: "My father runs the store at Hope City. I never seen my mother, but she was white and decent."

Gail says that never in his life had he spoken her name before. You know his kind—their mothers are the only straight women they know. They'd as soon cut off their hands as speak of them ordinarily. But he had injured the girl's own flesh and blood, so it was up to him to lay his own as bare, by way of what you might call penance.

"What—is—a—squaw-man?" she asked him slowly, seeing his eyes wet. "I only came North this Spring."

Gail thought a minute, then turned his back to look at the pictures. He said: "A monster, a leper——" But he didn't finish. He'd said enough.

He heard the cabin door close. Turning around, he saw that she was gone.

He ran after her, she stumbling like a shadow through the gravel hills of the moraine where the ice ends. You know the sort of place—as if it were a piece of the world made by God with His left hand, and so ugly He abandoned it. Like one of these big crocodiles of before the flood, only more gigantic, all sunk in and shriveled as if by sickness, with boulders big as a house breaking through the coarse skin. And soon they were swallowed up by cliffs of dirty ice, where gravels rattle down into round blue ponds as they would if shot from a rifle.

She led him to the pot-hole where the river was born, spouting up from under the ice-foot the color of coffee, fighting against boulders all polished and white, that would seem to crash down when you looked at them. And there she stopped in a little fringe of dead grass.

She stooped, and leaned out over the hole. "You want to drown yourself?" Gail shouted over the roar, grabbing her arm and dragging her back as she was losing balance.

She muttered something; Gail didn't exactly hear, but it was like some person's not mattering who or what, but she loved him, loved him. Then, more distinctly, "Yes, drown myself!"

"You don't mean that!" he said, and took her in his arms, and stumbled up through the cones away from the pot-hole. "Forgive me, in the name of God, forgive me!" begged Gail, setting her down, "for driving you to it, for what I said about your father."

But she said: "No, no, not drown myself. It's not for father. I—I—only wanted to see where they'd come out in March. Wasn't that the place?"

"Yes," said he, relieved. "But you won't never see their bodies, with us hitting for the Tanana over the first snow. You know we have no guns, and that means scurvy."

"Scurvy!" she muttered. "I'll risk that. I've told you I'll wait for them till I die—more than ever now."

He thought a minute. "I can't leave you here alone," he said. "You got to sled it out with me, whether you want to or not. Hear me?"

She hid her head in her hands and shivered. "You've got me at your mercy," she answered. "Spare me! Spare me in the name of the dead!"

"The dead is dead for good," he told her, all at once feeling strong and dizzy about his heart. Then, "Girl," he whispered, taking her hand in his, "I love you a'ready. You saved my life from starving; now I save yourn!"

She struggled from him. "You're cursed with the hard thoughts of this land!" she cried. "Once dead, always dead, you think, and the body doesn't matter. *I don't believe it!*"

He looked her in the eye. "You've never Wintered alone in the North, hev you?" he asked. "It's hell. Men get a worse thing than scurvy!"

"I will never love you!" she said. "Leave me. Go out alone!"

You see, never having loved before, Gail had never been thrown down. The sting of it was new to him, and he felt the smart; so he said between his teeth: "Alone in here, God in His heaven can't keep us apart!"

She cried out that she loathed him—for Gail to leave her there.

That hurt the savage in him just too much. So he struck back: "You ain't told me yet the whole truth about how them bodies died," he said quiet-like, from 'way down in his stomach. "You're the last seen them alive. There's law even in this land. You stay in here and, scurvy or no, I stay here, too!"

She saw those brown eyes of his shake, and her mouth took in one long breath. "Oh, oh!" she gasped. "You think I killed them? I?"

"Then what for else did you try to drown yourself," he said, "when I asked you about your husband?"

She looked him in the eye, and told him that he had the reason wrong.

"And I don't mean it," he laughed. "You know I don't. But if you had killed them, I'd love you just the same!" Then he sobered, and said, "It'll be a devilish Winter, with you half crazy for these dead ones, pretending your love for me is hate. With me burning for you—and the cold and stillness settling on our minds. God can't hold us to account for what we do."

But she had run away, back toward the cabin.

From there on the moraine you can see the river twist away in tangles and small coils on its big bed, where the boulders are round and white and stained with a moss that's red as blood, then twist to where the woods touch the tundra and are purple like a cloud. Gail stood awhile, then looked up the dumb ice avenue, growing white and still under the night cloud. And the steeples of the hills that rose clean from the black drift, through air cold and heady as it is in Autumn, looked down on him; and his heart pounded on, flushing him hot with love and shame.

"Curse me for speaking that way!" he said aloud. "Forgive me, girl; I love you so! We got to live it out the best we can, and keep a hold upon ourselves."

But he was thinking, too, of that Winter sky so like brass it seems you can sound it with a stone; and the one cloud on it, no bigger than your hand, that doesn't move once in a month. You don't act and think then as if you were on earth. You don't think you *are* on earth. The threads in your brain stretch till they break—and you don't know what you do. Your partner takes a spare spoonful of sugar, and you flare up, and maybe—well, only listen.

Snow fell to stay before November. Gail held himself in better than he anticipated. And her seeming devotion to a memory defied his living love. He couldn't persuade her to sled out, and when he would ask forgiveness for calling her a murderess she fled away from him. There was no more touching of hands. Things went on as before she tried to drown herself. He got to be simply happy again at being in her presence, over the meals and at cards.

It grew to be January. There lay the cabin, a dot in the white darkness on the dark snow; the jet hills white and fluffy, the hellish moraine soft and rumpled like a bedspread, the pot-hole frozen as if it were a mound of slag glass. Clean and even, the glacier swept back to the big mountains, where it hung on cliffs that seemed to be lace from window curtains, though three sheer miles high and snow whipping in smoke from the top. So the cold and stillness covered them like an ocean, as may be at the North Pole on the planet Jupiter. And though the sky was brass, and from ten to three o'clock the sun burned a curve through it, low over the mean timber in the south, Gail felt no need to throw a stone at it.

He got to doubt all he had heard—and knew himself—of the strain of Winter on your mind; of sure scurvy without fresh meat, though every morning he searched his legs for the stains that are its first signs, and exercised regularly hauling wood, often taking the girl with him. Living seemed to have got on a dead center.

Of course it couldn't last. It was the dead center of a boy's top asleep—quietest before it breaks loose and reels crazy. That's always the way with the Winter madness; like the skin stains, it gets into you when you think it's the last thing likely in the world. And the longest calm leads to the fiercest outburst.

Some telling little things happened, which Gail ought to have noticed, and didn't. First he began to worry again over why the girl had tried to kill herself. Then the mystery of how her folks got in the glacier kept him awake nights—reckoning the day when they'd come out, if the ice moved at the rate of thirty feet, which she said once she had proved it did. He would count over the few times their names had been mentioned. One day, while checking over the grub-sacks, he saw a tag hanging to each one, written in a queer hand, each letter straggly and separated from the next one. He screwed up courage, and asked her if it was her husband's writing. "No," she answered him; "my father's. My husband couldn't write." Then he saw one bag lying apart from the others—a little sack of rice, under the bench, which, as Gail did no cooking, he hadn't noticed before. He started to put it with the grub-pile, but she said, "Don't. Leave it there."

"Why?" asked Gail.

"Father poisoned it for killing sables," she told him. "But—but he couldn't get any."

"Poisoned it?" said Gail.

SOMETIMES he got the idea that no bodies were in the glacier. He forgot to look every day for scurvy signs, and felt logy. Often he had a tight feeling around his head, and when she spoke it seemed that they were two persons in the dark, their voices coming from miles and miles, though the slush-lamp was lighted. Their card score, which ran on from day to day, they grew to set too much store by, and once when they argued who was ahead, the girl started to cry. The kick of the top was coming.

She would sit all day sewing buckskin. When he asked her what for, she said that she was making mitts for him, and though he told her the dead men had left plenty, she kept right on. She would ask him how he liked her bread, whether he wanted more fat in the beans; helped him first, and seemed to starve herself.

At last one change in her did worry him. Once, going with the sleds down to timber, he saw her scratching the inch-deep frost from the celluloid window of the cabin, watching him from inside. He waited behind a rock. In a while she came out all muffled up, and started shoeing it up the valley, then out on the glacier, toward where the men had gone in. He said he felt that no power on earth could hold him down on the tundra. He came back early. Some distance from the cabin he saw her rubbing out her tracks in the snow. And when she sighted him, she ran past into the shack, hiding her head, and wouldn't play cards that night.

But next morning he touched bedrock, when he looked at his legs. There was the brown splotch on the calf—scurvy! That woke him up. He saw that to keep alive and healthy must count more than human love and homage to the dead. He seemed to be falling out of a dream. He said that the love of life hit him strong and sudden, as it does when you're camping on a river bar in Spring and discover floods are on you.

But the ailment dulled him, and that day he put off telling the girl about it, and started for the timber. Again she watched him through the window frost, and he hung behind the rock. Again she came out on snow-shoes and headed up the glacier. A quick feeling took Gail, so fierce he couldn't choke it, and he followed her; up past the pond where they had first met, out on the ice to where the boulder had been balanced, which of course had vanished long ago.

She was cleaning the snow from a yellow rock full of queer square holes when he came up behind her; and then she dug in the glacier as if looking for a crevice.

He blurted out that he had scurvy, and that so must she; how they must hit right out for the Tanana, or, said Gail, "We won't be accountable to God for what we do. You ain't been for several days."

She only trembled and closed the lids of her blue eyes. "Every day you've followed me!" she whispered hoarsely. "Oh, you are cruel, cruel!"

"You're about to give in to me, about ready, girl," he said. Then shouted: "By heaven! you've got to!"

And with that she fell all of a heap in the snow.

She sobbed his name, his full name—Gabriel; and as he leaned over her, she cried that she loved him, that she saw now she had loved him all along; was sure now that the bodies would never come out of the ice; and they would leave for the Tanana tomorrow.

He took her in his arms, unwound the muffler from her face, and kissed her, kissed her there in the cold, their lips all cold, I guess—kissed her everywhere.

She was laughing as they shoed back to the cabin. She told Gail that it had been a fight all along to keep caring for the dead, because she thought she ought to. She said he didn't know women, or he should have seen that her very coldness meant she loved him—though she didn't know it herself. "You fool!" she laughed.

I don't know how the next hours passed

with them. Such happiness is no business of mine. I know that such happiness isn't right for Winter in the white darkness on the dark snow. Gail told me—"Oh, we only talked of what was ahead of us in the world." And Gail was honorable, so I believe him.

Next morning he hit out early to bring kindlings from the timber, for they were to travel to the Tanana all above tree-line, leaving the next day after. He ran ahead of his sled, singing. The air was warmer, the brass faded from the sky, which was full of lamb's-tail clouds. In there, storms are rare, but terrible when they come, for snow generally falls at night, almost through starlight. Gail was thinking of the dead men's foresight in building the cabin sheltered by the hills, when, near the edge of a small pond, a root caught a thong of his shoe, so that he stumbled and fell. Rising to his feet, he felt his hand slip over something in the snow, smooth as if greased.

He pulled it out—a red leather blank-book, or diary, you might say. He opened it and started to read, turning from page to page. Soon his face lighted up. "The old man's journal," he said aloud. "Her father's." And then he read some entries like, "Roan lost four hours." "Killed a bull moose, horns in velvet." "Chelthan away all night, hunting."

"Who's Chelthan?" he asked. And then he saw another entry. His eyes and hands grew stiff as ice. He swore as he read it the second time:

> I give him the pizened rice this morning. But the man smelt it. I'll have his life yet.

Gail clapped the book into his pocket and hiked back to the cabin as if the devil were behind him. He found the girl outside the door, loading a sled, and took a grip on himself.

"I found this here down on the tundra," he said breathless. "Guess you know it, too."

"My father's!" she said quick. "Give it here!" and tried to take it from his hands.

"I ken read the handwriting," he said with a chill in his voice. "I see how he tried to 'poison sable.'"

Shaking all over, she asked him what right he had to read it.

"Who a better, girl," he said, "than I who love his daughter?"

"Let me have it!" was all she answered, closing her wide eyes and holding out her hand.

He made no move, just looked gently at her and shook his head. "Why ain't you told me in all these months, girl? Why ain't you told me last night?" he asked, his throat filling. "I wouldn't hev loved you any the less. We could 'a' borne the stain together, girl. Why ain't you told me that the old man killed your husband?"

"I didn't know!" she cried. "I wasn't sure. I only suspected. Father hated him—yes, from the day last June we ran away and were married. I was waiting for the bodies, to make sure—to clear my father."

"Couldn't you put two and two together?" said Gail, showing her the entries in the diary, as their white breaths mingled.

When she had read them, Gail said: "Chelthan—funny name! Was your husband a Swede? I figure it he was lured up the glacier, and in the fight they both fell in."

She did not answer him.

"Why should your old man kill him?" he said gently. "You ain't told me yet."

"Wait!" said the girl, catching her breath. "Wait! If you love me, Gail—love me—don't ask me yet! Not till we've started. On the way home."

He took her in his arms and carried her into the cabin, not feeling how all her limbs were trembling, and laid her on her bed.

He walked the floor a while, his head down between his shoulders, looking now and then at the pictures nailed there above her. "Girl," he said, "it's all over and we're saved. Starting to-morrow, it's a case of marry at the first sky-pilot—or a claim-recorder's office would do, eh, girl?"

She turned her back to him on the bed, burying her head.

"Let's get rid of these," he said, leaning over her. "Sight of them only brings to mind what has near ruined us both, but now is buried and forgotten." And with that he ripped the several photos, including those of her father and the Siwash, from the logs.

First he tore up the father, and the pieces fell on the bed into her hair. But the picture of the Indian stuck in his hand. It turned him into stone. His face grew darker than the snow outside, as his lips moved over and over, reading what was written on the back of it:

Chelthan, my husband.

"*Siwash! Leper!*" he yelled, grinding his teeth.

She rose up and stretched out her arms to him. She begged him to have mercy, to have mercy on her, for Gail to have mercy—to kill her if he must.

He only backed off from the bed as you might from a cage of snakes, tearing the photo into little bits with his strong fingers; and then ground them into the floor with his heel.

"Your old man was dead right! I should have done the same," he said from down in the cellar of his soul. "I should have killed him, too!"

She called Gail's name, rising to seize him about the waist.

He shook her off.

The girl laughed and cried all at once. "How could I know you'd hate—father'd hate—me for marrying Chelthan? How'd I know what a despised crime it is? And when I first learned from father, and he wouldn't speak to me, of course I stood by Chelthan. I saw we just came in here to get rid of him. But I'd never believe that father'd kill him till I saw the body. And then"—she choked—"when you told me—after I'd begun to love you—what—what a monster I was—of course I wanted to kill myself—in quick shame—they still had souls and were my flesh—and in love for you—so strong I hated you!"

"Why didn't you kill yourself?" Gail sneered. "I wish you had!"

She looked into his eyes a minute, where the whites had grown bluish and bulgy, and fell sobbing on his feet, twisting herself about his ankles. He watched her a while, and then untangled his legs from her, and stepped over and away, as you might out of a quicksand.

"I told you what you was," said Gail, careless-like. "You're dirtier than any squaw-man, for you're a woman! Keep in your pest-house here. Don't you follow me!"

She lay there, her long hair spread out on the floor from the black point of her widow's peak. She lay still, having fainted. Gail stopped at the door, where he said that something seemed to burst inside his head.

"Girl, good-by," he told her very slowly. "I guess the madness has got me, too. It ain't my fault now, what I do, either, girl." And he said he felt of his eyes, and found them all wet.

HE CLOSED the door softly, and fell into his snow-shoes. Up to then he'd held himself in; now he broke loose. It was snowing, and in the North that change from the clear cold suffocates you. He hit up the valley on the run, past where he once had seen her measuring, and dashed out on the glacier. He didn't know where he was going, nor why. But he steered straight for the place where she confessed she loved him. He was sure where it was, but couldn't find the rock—the yellow rock covered with square holes, you remember. He couldn't understand, either, how he found his way so easily and felt so safe in the storm.

His mind was clear as ice. He started down the glacier, counting his strides out loud: "Four, five, six," —six feet to a step, you know. He must have missed the yellow rock long ago, the ice couldn't have moved it so far in one day. "Eight, nine—" and just then the snow boiled down from about his head, and the moon jumped out bright, making the mountain look like a lighted castle. And there was the yellow rock about a step in front of him!

He calculated faster than he could help, he said, something like this: "That rock's moved fifty feet in a day, out here in the middle where the ice flows faster, and we've been figuring on thirty—wrong all along. At that rate, it would mean the bodies"—and he reckoned like lightning—"*the bodies should be out at the pot-hole NOW!*"

He cut down to the moraine, wallowing through the fresh snow, sliding over the gravel cliffs, across the solid ponds. At the frozen hill where the river had boiled up, he scraped the snow from the top. The ice was clear, and he could look clean through it. He saw the thing, the Siwash, just as she said—like a fly in amber. He lay face up, an arm crooked over his head as if to ward off a blow, and the legs curved together, as a dead fish rests frozen in a pond.

The face—Gail said its teeth showed in the cat-snarl you give when a man sneaks behind you and runs cold fingers down your back. But the fingers here were steel, and the grin so much the happier, for, touching the neck was a sort of scarlet globe, and on the surface of it, like a flaw in a big ruby, the shiny end of a dirk handle. He looked harder. 'Way down, slowly coming out of the moraine, was a hand, a white hand, stiff like it was made of ivory, reaching out to the knife and blood.

Then the storm shut in, and he grabbed his head again, for he was seeing red. He swore the body moved, was alive and fighting to get up at him—this beast that had grafted like a fungus on the body of the girl he loved. Let Gail at him first! He must have dug with his finger-nails or knife down through the rotting ice, for he remembers yanking it by the feet, ripping it out of the case it fitted so nicely. Next he knew, he was blind and choking, fighting for air, like a rat in a pit—crazy. To rise and breathe, he must trample what was under him; and so, fighting and stamping, he struggled up through the snow.

You've never killed a man—no? Never lost your temper, shot at him and missed, —yes? Well, then, you know how you feel on the rebound. You're as meek as you were angry, as scared and pitiful as you were dancing-red. And Gail had the Winter-madness, hadn't he, and a grudge that may well make a monster of a man for good?

He remembers sitting in the snow, looking at the body and thinking: "Now I'm even. I done my job—the duty o' my nature. And the old coward stuck you from behind, too, you cuss. Poor fool, you knew no better. And you looked like a good Siwash. —I done this for you, girl, for you. God help me, but I love you!"

You see, Gail was still mad to talk like that. But could he help it? I've never been in love. I don't know how crazy it can make you. A queer thing—love!

He started to crawl back to her in the cabin, up out of the snow-cones. He was weak as broth, and the blizzard was spouting drifts, cutting his neck in sheets of snow. Before he got to the edge of the moraine the drowsiness strangled him, and he lost hold upon his head.

IT MUST have been before the storm broke, that I saw the light of their cabin from down on the tundra.

When that science outfit had reached Hope City again, they reported having lost Gail. I was working in the store for his father, and so got their dog-team. We knew that when Gail couldn't find that outfit he'd hit for the mountains, and whatever of him was left would lie along the face of the hills, to be found by hitting northeast from the head of the south fork. It was a bad trip alone, breaking trail, and two of the dogs died, which is neither here nor there.

Somehow I knew it was his cabin before I opened the door. I found the girl still senseless on the floor. When I brought her to, it was pitiful the things she said, stumbling to the window, pointing out and wailing Gail's name.

I hunted an hour before I found him, and was nearly all night bringing him to. I try to forget the next few days before we hit out for the Tanana. Gail and the girl would talk to me as if their hearts would break, but not a word to each other. I learned all—perhaps I wouldn't have acted as I did if I'd been wise at first. They both looked like creatures hid in a cave—I've seldom seen beings farther gone from scurvy.

The storm cleared the third day, and I shot a caribou. You know how meat cleans the blood and a new face clears the foolishness from two Wintering alone in the white darkness on the dark snow.

But no miner will tell you that all Gail's coarse work was foolish. Ought I to reconcile them? I guess not. Gail was my partner, and the living taint was still with us. But maybe no degradation is too low not to have its redemption. And if your hands be put to blood, doing of the ugly job may win it—I don't know. Happiness is hard to choke when you've suffered for it.

Each hardly moved from his sled the three weeks going out, till we hit the Tanana camps. The first night, living in the Recorder's tent, I saw Gail and her talking. That was enough for me. I took a job of burning up on the creeks and lit out.

When I came back in the Spring the Recorder said they'd left for down river almost at once. I had never told him. After the break-up, the first steamer from St. Michael's brought me a letter. I opened it before I knew it was from her. Perhaps I would have, anyway. It said that she and Gail were leaving for the States for good, because they couldn't face any of us in the North any more. "Gail seems to be losing his memory of all that happened. Should I remind him? I *can't!*"

Well, if he does—but in the States they may look at things differently. And sometimes I still think of Gail as my partner.

Yellow Men and Gold

by Gouverneur Morris

Author of "The Voice in the Rice"

SYNOPSIS: James Parrish, learning of a sunken Spanish treasure-ship near the Straits of Magellan, is shanghaied by Carrol and other rascals on to the *Shantung*, a trading-schooner operated by twelve Chinamen and one white woman, with Lichee, her little son. They undertake the quest for the treasure and in Lima, Peru, are joined by Carmen, who seeks vengeance on Carrol for murdering her husband and torturing her to gain the treasure. Partly through Jerry Top, a half-simple native castaway, the treasure is found, but several of the Chinamen are killed from ambush by Carrol and his party, who have reached the scene in the *Calliope*. Parrish burns the *Calliope*, and two of the enemy are drowned. To save Lichee, captured and threatened by Carrol, Parrish takes his place and guides them to the treasure. He escapes, and his pursuer is killed by Jili, one of the Chinamen.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WHITE FLAG AGAIN

IN THE hold of the *Shantung*, each in its redwood packing-case, were twelve coffins of American manufacture, already engraved with the names of those who were some time or other expected to occupy them. Your Chinaman can not bear the thought of being buried at sea or permanently in a foreign land; and, indeed, to be absolutely sure of resting one day in Chinese soil, he would cheerfully curtail the full measure of his days.

Those coffins for which there were now occupants were hoisted to the deck, and the afternoon was passed in soldering their leaden linings hermetically over our dead, screwing down the lids and slipping the coffins again into their packing-cases. The *Shantung's* cabin was then once more made to serve as a receiving-vault, and the coffins ranged lengthwise along the walls; the center of the cabin being kept open as usual for meals, games of cards, navigation, and all of its thousand and one other uses.

While we were carrying Chang's coffin into the cabin two shots were fired at us from the island; one splintered diagonally into the deck, and one flew wide. So, having stowed the bodies, we got up the *Shantung's* anchor and moved her, perhaps a quarter of a mile, or as far as the width of the fiord would permit, farther out from the landing; and also erected a flimsy screen of canvas that could be shifted from side to side, according to how the ship lay on the rising or falling tide, and behind which we could move about unseen. The screen, of course, offered no obstacle to a bullet; but we agreed that men with a limited supply of ammunition would not waste it on a wall of canvas in the wild hope of hitting some one who might be at a particular point behind it.

Furthermore, the added distance between us and the shore precluded the idea of any desperate man swimming off to us in the night. Only Jerry Top, a native of the region, who could bask naked in the midst of a drizzle with the mercury at 45°, for all the world like a lizard in the sun, could have accomplished so tremendous a feat of natation. Had it not been for the desperate men ashore, of whom he stood in mortal terror, he would, I think, have tried it at this time.

For the man's likes and dislikes had already turned topsy-turvy. He was now as sick of ship life as formerly he had been of that on shore. And he babbled continually and very lovingly of terra firma, of moist hollows among the wet rocks, of raw seagulls, of occasional feasts upon the putrid blubber of a stranded whale. He told us that he had a ton or more of whale buried on the island; and that if he could not come at it soon he feared it would pass its prime. The clothes, too, that he was made to wear aboard ship fretted him cruelly. He was as sorry to remain aboard as he had been rejoiced to come.

Early the next morning Carrol presented himself on the landing, bearing a white flag; and after a somewhat heated discussion between Jili and Ah Fing, was brought off in the boat. He carried himself with commendable bravado, but it was evident that hunger pricked him and that he was really sick with the cold in his head.

"Jim," said he to me, "that was an awful thing you did to Todd."

"Don't give me the credit of it," said I, "though I dare say it was no more than he deserved."

"So it wasn't you?" he said. "Well, I'm glad; it wasn't nice to think that a white man had done it. I suppose you'll be surprised to hear that I've come on an errand of mercy. Ah! Good morning, Lichee."

"Morning," said Lichee, and grinned.

"It's about Blake," said Carrol, and he seated himself heavily on the deck and leaned against the mainmast. "Excuse me—but," and he smiled ruefully, "I've been up all night with him; but we can't do anything for him. I've come to ask you in common charity to take him aboard. You've got medicines, haven't you, and whisky? He'd have a chance here."

"What ails the man," said Bessie, "that shouldn't ail him?"

"I suppose it's pneumonia," said Carrol. "It began with a heavy cold, and now he's delirious, and burning up with fever."

Bessie pointed to the closed door of the cabin.

"In there, Mister Carrol," she said, "are five dead men who were kinder to me than brothers. Now you ask me to take one of the men that murdered them aboard the ship and nurse him back to health and strength. I'll tell you what we'll do for you, Mister Carrol! We'll take him aboard and we'll nurse him. If he dies—well and good; if he doesn't die—if he recovers—well, then, just as soon as he's well enough and strong enough to understand what's happening, we'll hang him as high as he can be hoisted on the end of a rope. And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"Jim," said Carrol, "have you no influence among these heathen?"

"Not enough," said I, "to turn their human natures upside down, any more than my own. Those dead men in there were like brothers to me, Carrol. And I can find it in my heart to think of this Blake's plight with positive satisfaction, God forgive me!"

"It's a hard world," said Carrol, "and Blake's blood is on your head, Jim, not mine."

"I guess there's little room left on your head for anybody else's blood, Mister Carrol!" said Bessie tartly. "And now if you've said your say, I guess you'd better be moving."

He rose to his feet, staggering a little, but with a show of temper.

"All right!" he said, "all right! But answer me this—where do you all come in? Here you are, to be sure, and very snug, to be sure—but the treasure's with us; and you're no nearer to it than you were before you ever heard of it! So if at any time you have any reasonable overtures, just let us know."

"Carrol," said I, "we have discussed that subject already among ourselves under two heads. It was first proposed to go ashore and hunt you people down like so many quail, from rock to rock, from gully to gully, from your first hiding-place to your last, and there exterminate you. But the vote went against that plan. And the present idea is to leave you severely alone——"

Carrol laughed sneeringly.

"You better!" said he.

"—to leave you severely alone," I went on, "until, one by one, you have gone where Blake is going, and by the same road. How long can you people hold on to your miserable lives—on that barren rock? Will the green beech stems burn, even supposing that there is a dry match left among you? How long can you eat raw gull? If the rain holds off, you will die of thirst; and if the rain falls—and indeed I felt a drop not a minute ago—you are as well able to stand showers of corrosive sublimate."

He compressed his lips tightly, but still sneering, "Jim," said he, "I don't know a bolder talker than yourself when you've got your friends to back you. But yesterday, when you were visiting us, you kept a civiler and less bloodthirsty tongue in your head!"

I crimsoned to my eyes with shame; for what the man said was perfectly true.

"But with me," said he, "it's different. And among friends or enemies you'll find me the same. When I tell you to your faces"—his face became gradually frenzied with rage—"that I'm going to cut the heart out of every mother's son of you, I mean it! And as for the mother's daughters among you—ask that Spanish thing there what I did to her!"

"Mister Carrol," said Bessie quietly, "among Chinamen a white flag protects its bearer as surely as an army. But the amount of honor that an outcast woman can claim is so small and valueless to her, that if you don't get out of this ship in about three shakes of a lamb's tail—I'll fix you! And I'll fix you good!"

Her temper had risen, and she glared into the man's face and walked slowly toward him, her arms akimbo and her chin thrust sharply forward and up. Carrol clenched his right hand. He was brave, and no mistake; for he must have known that he had but to strike the woman to be literally torn to pieces the next instant—and I think he meant to strike her. Jili's crooked knife was already flashing in his hand, clean once more and sharp. I sprang between Bessie and Carrol.

"Carrol," said I, "certain things have been said to you that you may as well put in your pipe and smoke. My God, man, think of Todd!"

He must have done so, for his face changed on the instant from crimson to ash.

"I guess you're right, Jim," he said mildly.

A moment more and he had gone over the side and was being ferried ashore.

CHAPTER XXIV

TERMS

WELL, as the saying is, we sat down to wait, and felt pretty sure of our affair. Before Carrol had stepped from the boat to the landing the rain was once more descending in torrents. You may lay it against me that I was not unduly moved with the thought of human beings succumbing inevitably to exposure, and so near at hand. But I was not. The island and its transient inhabitants seemed very far off.

Do you, for instance, when you read of a terrible famine in distant India really take the matter to heart? I think not, for it is only a rare and a very morbid imagination that can picture sufferings beyond the seas with sufficient vividness to be troubled by them. Can you not pass a city hospital with laughter and jest? Are you in the least affected, though you fling them a thought, perhaps, by the sufferings that are going on within? You do not hear the screams, nor smell the ether, nor feel the passing of souls. If all the world's death-beds and tortures came near enough, you yourself would die of pain. But a brick wall, the roof of a house, the width of a street, keep you in blissful ignorance.

How much more, then, the width of a fiord, and the rocky heights of an island. It was harder to sit down among our own dead in the cabin to eat a meal, than to think of Blake in his last throes. And, after a meal or two, that feeling of wretched discomfort passed and I grew used to leaning against Chang's coffin and watching a deal of fan-tan eat up my resources.

Have I said that I was made to gamble furiously aboard the *Shantung?* Alas, it is so! And having not a penny of my own in the world, I was a constant recipient of forced loans. Our stakes, it is true, were wondrous small; but the excitement was as great as among men playing for thousands. At checkers and backgammon I could hold my own; and I was beginning to see the inner workings of fan-tan; chess, however, was not a contest but a series of presents from me to the adversary, though I once pushed Lichee very close for a rubber. Bessie played cards with astonishing good luck and very little skill; Carmen played well and unluckily; but the only heavy winners among us were poor Chang, who was dead, and Lichee.

The child played with real genius; and it was a great feather in the cap of any one who could worst him. He knew every card in the pack; at whist he seemed to know by intuition, after a lead or two, exactly what hands were held by the various players.

The meanings and values of cards and their combinations were far easier to him than his own baby talk, English or Chinese. Neither did he win with the unnecessary vivacity, or lose with the dismalness of your amateur. Give the child a pack of cards and he was a Jack Hamlin. Sometimes for sport, and without stakes, he would play me a game of piquet, announcing beforehand that he intended to cheat; but, watch as I might, I could never catch him at it; and he would half close his black sloe eyes, and roar at my ignorance and stupidity.

For two days and nights it rained and sleeted, and the wind howled. And we passed the time with games and cards and conversation. We even had a great candy-pull, got up by Carmen for Lichee's benefit; and made a great mess in the galley boiling down molasses and pulling it till it was white, sprinkling our hands with flour so that the sticky mass should not adhere. And all this merry-making was to pass the time that our enemies should take in dying!

Well, now that it's all over, that is, perhaps, a horrible thought. But even if we had sat in solemn rows, twiddling our thumbs, it would not have helped in any way. And, as a matter of fact, while we were trying to amuse time away none of our enemies died but Blake; and his death had come upon him while Carrol was being ferried to the shore.

I

THE third day broke overcast but rainless. During the night Jerry Top had left us, being sick to death of schooner life. But whether he swam off to the island or to the mainland we never knew. Probably it was to the latter, since it was nearer and not populated by people likely to do him harm. He left the clothes with which we had supplied him lying on the deck, and departed the *Shantung* almost as naked as he had come to her—but not quite. For we found that he had taken one hairbrush belonging to Bessie, Lichee's clasp-knife, and a jar of strawberry jam. For my part, I wish him well and hope that whenever he tires of shore life he will spy a vessel in the offing, and *vice versa.*

About nine o'clock of the third day Carrol, once more waving the white flag, was seen on the landing, and on the brink of the cliffs far above him we perceived the rest of the gang, Kelsey, Brandreth, and another whose name turned out to be Swigot. These three sat upon the edge of the cliff, at a point where it was more than perpendicular, and, their legs hanging into space, resembled three small boys on a very high wall. And it seemed to me that in thus disregarding the perilous altitude they showed something of the desperation to which they must have been brought by the cold and the rain.

But we kept Carrol a long time waiting, and decided at last to bring him off to the schooner only because we had been pent up so long that we were eager for diversion even of a disagreeable nature. Furthermore, we thought that by a close look at Carrol we could estimate how long the business of waiting might be expected to endure.

But it was evident at first glance that Carrol's deposits of adipose were serving him in good stead; they formed a kind of granary of reserved strength and nutrition upon which he could draw. White he was —very; thinner; and had a grave, drawn look; but his eye sparkled with intelligence and determination; and, whatever his inmost estimate of the situation, he had neither the expression nor the bearing of a beaten man.

He chose to present himself as the herald of the stronger party, as, indeed, he was in one way; for the treasure, now as always the real sinews of war, remained for the present on his side of the quarrel; and he chose to be sharp with us for having kept him waiting.

"If you hadn't sent for me when you did," said he arrogantly, "I would have refused to treat with you at all."

"Treat with us!" said Bessie.

"And why not?" said he. "I am at this moment more times a millionaire in terms of bullion than any man in the world. I am in a position to treat with an emperor, let alone with a scrubby ship's company whose only assets are a couple of stoves and a cockroachy schooner! Now then, I am prepared to offer you a handsome sum to land me and my friends safely in Rio, and, in addition, a handsome bonus for handling the treasure. I am authorized to offer virgin gold to the amount of fifty thousand dollars."

"And suppose," said I, "that we refuse this munificent offer, row quickly ashore and take possession of this treasure, which by every ethical right belongs to us, and sail away, leaving you and your friends to think the matter over?"

"Jim," said he, "if you'd acted on that idea a few days ago, instead of sitting down to starve us out, I won't deny that you could have worked it, since you outnumber us two to one, and have plenty of weapons. But you preferred, apparently, not to face any active or dangerous issue, and now, few and weak though we are, the game's in our hands. Don't think we spent the opportunity you gave us twiddling our thumbs. No, sir! We worked like mules, and bit by bit we dug out every sliver of the treasure, and most of the gems, I guess, and we transplanted 'em, digging by day and carrying by night, until the whole mass of it lies on the cliff yonder, where the boys are sitting and dangling their legs."

"Thank you kindly," said I, "for your trouble. And it seems to me you've only saved us much time and labor."

But he shook his head gently and smiled pityingly in my face.

"The advantages of our position," he said softly, "would be obvious to any one but a nincompoop."

"Doubtless," I said; "but you will certainly have to explain them to me."

"Why, Jim," said he, "we four survivors of the late *Calliope* are in desperate straits. I admit that we're half starved; we're chilled to the bone; and though we've kept going on nerve and excitement, we can't keep it up forever, nor indeed for very long. Perhaps you think we're good-tempered about the way things have gone against us from the start? Perhaps you think we're grinning and bearing our misfortunes like the good Christians that we—aren't? No, we're feeling pretty —— savage and resentful if you want the truth. If we've got to perish miserably on that damned rock, well and good; but our last death-rattle isn't going to enrich anybody; because we intend, if you people won't listen to reason, to throw every grain of the treasure from the cliff into the fiord. And the waters there, as I know that have sounded them, are a hun-hundred fathoms deep. Now, maybe you've got a healthier view of the situation?"

I must admit that the new turn in the affair threw us into a very considerable consternation. The Chinamen burst into full council, all talking at once and at the top of their lungs; and Bessie, too, mingled with them, haranguing, almost shouting, and stamping her foot.

"What are they saying, Jim?" asked Carrol.

"I wish I knew," said I. "But whatever it is, they'll come to a decision pretty quick."

The hubbub ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and Bessie came forward as spokesman.

"We want to know, Mister Carrol," said she, "about how much you think the stuff foots up to?"

"We've no scales on the island," said he, "so it's impossible to make any kind of an estimate; especially of the gems. But there's enough to make me and my friends feel pretty wealthy."

"Well," said Bessie, "our feeling is this. We feel that your offer of fifty thousand dollars is mighty generous; and we don't want to be outdone. So we make you just the same offer: fifty thousand dollars to be divided among the four of you, and a safe passage to Rio."

"What!" exclaimed Carrol. "Why, the stuff's worth millions and millions, and you offer us fifty thousand dollars' worth—when the whole of it's ours—*ours! That* for your offer!" he cried, and he spat upon the deck.

"*Mister* Carrol," said Bessie, "we're as able to pay for our fancies as you are. You may take this offer or leave it. And you've got five minutes to make up your mind. Take it, and we'll keep our end of the contract faithfully; leave it, and by the living God, five minutes from now the boys go ashore to hunt down those friends of yours from their perch! If they chuck the treasure overboard, well and good, they've got sand. But I think, Mister Carrol, they'll run like whipped sheep! Jili—Ah Fing—Ho Lee—get your guns out, boys, and get a bead on those black birds on the cliff yonder!"

The Chinamen sprang to the work, and, poking their rifles here and there through the canvas screen that had been rigged to keep our actions hidden, prepared to make it hot for the men on the cliff, who, in utter ignorance of what was brewing, continued to kick their legs idly in space.

Carrol sprang to his feet, livid.

"Is this how you respect a flag of truce?" he cried. "May God strike me dead! there's no decency left among men!"

"Mister Carrol," cried Bessie, "the flag affects only you. Nobody's raising a hand against *you!* As for those skunks up yonder —there's nothing to protect them except the long range—four—five—six hundred yards

I call it—and that won't cover them long."

"It's murder!" Carrol screamed this at the top of his voice, hoping, I think, to warn his friends; but if his cry did reach them it passed unheeded.

"Try that again," said Bessie, "and we'll call the truce off—and you'll last about five seconds! Now then, my buck, take our proposition or leave it!"

"But I can't," said Carrol resolutely, "without consulting with my friends. I'm only one vote among four."

"Oh, well," said Bessie, "if that's all the influence you've got up yonder, and you the boss, the fount of wisdom, I guess we'd better open fire and have done with the business." She turned to the Chinamen.

"Jili——" she said.

"Hold on!" said Carrol "You guarantee us fifty thousand and a safe passage to Rio?"

"Fifty thousand," said Bessie, "and a safe passage—unless you try any dirty work!"

Carrol's face was a study. Resolute villain, I think he was capable of flinging the offer in our faces and dying a martyr to his own stubbornness. But it must be that at this moment the inklings of some future desperate plan came to him; for suddenly, and with considerable meekness, "I accept," said he, "for myself and for my friends."

"Well, *and* good!" said Bessie.

"And now," said he, "put me ashore, and I'll tell the boys."

For answer Bessie fetched the megaphone and thrust it into his hands.

"From the moment you accepted the proposition," said she, "we're responsible for your safe passage to Rio, and we're not going to let you run the risk of going ashore. Now then, 'phone those men that you've made a satisfactory arrangement—you needn't state the terms, or you might get yourself prematurely disliked. Tell them to come at once to the landing, and we'll send for them. And, by the way, they've got a rifle. Tell them to throw that into the fiord—so that I can see them do it."

Carrol rolled a wicked and baleful eye; but he put the megaphone presently to his mouth and gave his comrades their directions. For a few moments they appeared to consult; then one—Kelsey, it was—rose to his feet, raised the rifle high above his head, held it thus in full view for a second or two, and flung it from him. It seemed a long time falling, turned over slowly, and entered the water without any sound or splash that could be detected from the schooner. The three men then turned and disappeared, making for the head of the fissure that conducted to the landing.

"Well," said Carrol, shrugging his broad, fat shoulders, "that's over. Now for God's sake give me something to eat, and a drink, and let me dry out at the stove."

"Jili," said Bessie, "look after Mr. Carrol."

The way in which Jili did this must have astonished that desperate adventurer. Jili drove into the man's brawny legs, jerked them from under him, and pitched him heavily upon the deck. Then, falling upon him with ropes, Ah Fing and Ho Lee had in a moment so bound him that he could move no more than his fingers and toes.

"Look in his hip-pocket," said Bessie. "I thought so! A sawed-off Colt. Take the cartridges out of it, and give it to Lichee to play with. Take that knife, too, that he wears in his belt; he sports that so openly that I guess he's got another hidden. Find that."

It was as Bessie said. The man had a second knife in reserve. And his face became apoplectic with fury when this last resource was taken from him. Foam appeared on his lips and, rolling his head until he could see Bessie, "—— your soul to ——!" he cried, "you ——, you ——, you ——!"

"Jili," said Bessie, "if that sewer of a mouth starts to run again, get your sail-needle and take a couple of stitches in it."

"Carrol," I said, "I've enough humanity in me to advise you to be careful. You've spoken as a man has no right to speak to a woman were she Satan's mother. Try it again, and your lips will be sewed together like the lips of a wound; the stitches to be taken out at meal-time. Behave yourself, and you will be treated reasonably well."

He made no answer at all; and presently was carried into the galley, placed near the stove to dry, and fed by hand like a baby.

Not long afterward Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot came over the side; and three more forlorn, meek, spiritless sheep I have never had the pleasure to see. And they took to the idea of being bound with ropes as peacefully as tired men take to soft beds at the close of the long day.

Two small penknives, one vicious clasp-knife, and a revolver whose mainspring turned out to be broken, were found about them; and in Kelsey's watch-pocket a small bottle labeled spirits of lavender. Bessie was about to heave this overboard, but Carmen begged for it, saying that it was a well-known and harmless remedy for insomnia, and that she stood in great need of something of the kind. I think she spoke in good faith.

"But," said Bessie, "how do you know it's what the label says?"

Carmen uncorked the bottle, and sniffed at the contents, then broke suddenly into one of her rare and animated smiles.

"You tell by that-a smell," said she. And she recorked the bottle and thrust it into her bosom. "It's my hands," she said, nodding brightly; "they keep-a me awake. They have a what-you-call-him."

"Rheumatism?" I suggested, and she nodded.

"It's this cold, damp climate," I said, "you poor soul!"

"Yes," she said, "here it is too fraish for my poor bone."

CHAPTER XXV

CARMEN GIVES ADVICE

HOW often, during the next days of appalling labor for all hands, did I envy Carrol, Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot, in comfortable bondage, each with a pillow to his head, reclining in the warm galley and resting from wickedness!

Standing and contemplating the great mass of treasure on the cliff for the first time was, I think, the most delightful and thrilling occupation upon which I was ever engaged; and I could have spent a month turning over the pieces, admiring this admirable golden bowl, battered as it was; or piecing together the ancient Peruvian wainscoting and laying it in order (like the parts of a picture-puzzle) upon some level space of sand; or I could have looked by the hour into the heart of one ice-green emerald, and by the hour into the heart of the next.

Or I could turn away from the glistening, tarnished heap, losing my vision in the distances of the snow-capped mountains and flying hand in hand with the imagination to the active centers of civilization; there to see myself play the nabob, the philanthropist, the friend of the poor; my yacht should be white and tall upon the blue waters of Long Island Sound; my houses should stand wherever skies are bluest and nature is most grateful to the helping hand. I imagined in terms of hundred-acre lawns and marble stables. Or better, and less personally, I dreamed that I should do something noble with my money, of great good to the many, enduring and free from taint; though just what that should be I was admittedly unable to specify.

In short, like every other natural man in this world, I wanted the pleasure and the ease and the picturesqueness of great wealth without any of the labor. I wanted to sit upon the cliff and play with the museum pieces of the treasure, and guess the value they would bring in the market.

But after one hour of it exactly, I did not want to be one of the pack-mules that must carry the stuff like so much coal and help store it aboard the *Shantung*. Do you know that sixty pounds of gold is no easier to carry than sixty pounds of offal, and is heavier upon the shoulders of a man than the whole of his sins? But such is the fact.

And when you get under your load for the twentieth time in one day, and the straps of your pannier settle themselves into the raw furrows on your shoulders; and when, after a heavy stumble, the sixty pounds hits you a concentrated jarring bump upon the spine, then, indeed, you begin to understand the woes of the rich. And the woes of the rich are just as woful as the woes of the man who dynamites them. And this, having moved upon my own shoulders more than a ton of bullion in two days' time, I myself am prepared to certify, laying, if requested, my right hand truthfully upon the Book.

When at last it came to moving the silver—and this was of problematical value owing to the depths to which it was bitten by tarnish and destroyed, I struck work. Cold as was the wind and the drizzle, I stripped off my coat and shirt, and instructed Jili (who, ever since I had gone as an exchange for Lichee, had been very tender with me and thoughtful of my comfort) as a committee of one to examine my shoulders.

He reported them unfit for work, and though at a pinch I might have carried one more load (consisting of nothing less valuable than Koh-i-noors), I was invalided to guard duty over our four precious rascals in the galley. Hitherto I had only taken my turn at this; but for the whole of the last day during which we lay anchored in the fiord I kept the necessary eye on them, and played the bugbear generally.

The four, now well fed and warmed, began to take life very easily, and to joke with their jailors; but that the least opportunity would fill them once more with the old Nick was not to be doubted. During that last day, for instance, Carrol proposed, if I would set them free and arm them, to make me sole master of three parts of the treasure. To murder the Chinamen was the merest detail of the plan; and, although he opened the matter jocosely, I could see that he was not altogether sure as to whether I was to be tempted or not. Having heard him out to the end, however, I laughed in his face, and he laughed back.

"You treated me so faithfully and honorably in 'Frisco," said I, "that I feel sure you would do the same now if I set you free. All you have to do is to give your word to be believed by any one aboard this ship. Why, man, I don't believe—I honestly don't—that you ever so much as kept a promise given by yourself—to yourself. Suppose that yours had been the successful party, how many of them would you have allowed to survive to tell the tale?

"And I'll give you others a piece of mighty good advice. It's this—when you go ashore at Rio with your share of the fifty thousand that's to be handed over to you, keep an eye on Carrol here. He'll want the whole of it, and he'll get it—if you don't watch out!"

"Parrish don't think much of you, do 'e?" said Kelsey. "And I dunno's I blame 'im."

"It's a long, rolling road to Rio," said Brandreth cheerfully, "and between here and there the ocean's deep, and maybe we'll all roll on the bottom together."

"I dreamed last night," said Swigot, "that the —— ship blew up, and while I was in the air the ropes that bound me burst asunder, and I fell flop into the water, and was just striking out for shore when I gets all tangled up in the Chinks' pig-tails and is dragged under."

"On the level, Jim," said Carrol, "what do you think the treasure's worth?"

"Well," said I, "I toted the smallest share of anybody from the cliff to the boat. And I calculate roughly that that share was about twenty-eight hundred pounds of gold—that's more than a million dollars, just what I carried alone. Some of the boys made as many trips as I did and carried about a hundred pounds each time to my sixty. Then there are the emeralds and things, and the good Lord only knows what *they're* worth!"

"When I was in the land of the free," said Kelsey pathetically, "emeralds was high."

AND thus we argued and estimated, just as in a café four men may sit about a table and guess by the hour as to the fortune of Mr. Vanderbilt or Mr. Rockefeller, starting upon guessed premises, and arriving, of course, nowhere. It was wonderful to see how cheerful a topic to these four men was that of the millions that they had all but secured for themselves. So every family loves to dwell upon the gold mine that should have made it rich; or upon the timber lands sold at the wrong time by the unprophetic grandfather.

And so, I fancy, the civilized world over, the most toothsome of all gossip where men are met together is that of unboundable wealth. And if it were not for heavy gold, light women, and fast horses, civilized man would soon lose the use of his tongue.

A figure blocked the galley door and a shadow fell among us conversing. Carmen was on her rounds. Fifty times a day she would thus steal silently upon the prisoners, stand a while in the frame of the door, look her fill upon Carrol in his fallen fortunes, and steal as quietly away. But on this occasion she spoke.

"It is better," she said, "that fat man be kill before he do mischief. You think he mind them rope? Not *so* much!" And she snapped her distorted little fingers. "You keep faith with heem, but nobody keep faith with me. When I say I come along, and not want any gol' you promise me that man for myself. Now you not give heem me. But I tell you. I creep in here some fine night, when nobody on the look, and then I have my little fling with heem!"

She gazed for a long time into Carrol's

face, and he went white under the stare of her great accusing stag-eyes.

"If I not kill heem," she said, "that ver' bad. When he break loose, and cut your heart out, you not like hear me say 'I tole you so.' That man poison, just lak snake. He wear that-a rope 'cause it suit heem; but he not have to."

She turned and went as suddenly and as silently as she had come; but her few words had blunted the edge of cheerful conversation.

And Carrol in particular was badly scared by them.

"I tell you," he said, "I don't like it. I was promised a safe passage to Rio, and I submitted to be bound. I demand either that these ropes come off, or that I be guarded night and day. I tell you, it gives me the chills to think of that revengeful hussy creeping in here some night and cutting my throat!"

"You may be quite sure," said I, "that anything of that kind will certainly be prevented."

"Quite sure's not sure enough," said he.

"Well," said I, "it's the nearest sure you can be in this world."

"And to think," said he, in the tone of one who has missed the short end of a hundred-to-one shot at the races, "that I could have killed her, one time in Lima, just as well as not; could have had the business hushed up, and never need have had this hanging over me! I tell you it's —— unpleasant, not to put it stronger."

THE next day dawned with watery sunshine and capricious breezes. We got up the anchor and stood down the fiord for the open stretches of Beagle Channel, and about ten o'clock had left the scenes of our desperate adventures behind.

Looking astern, the great white blotches of the headland dwindled and ran together until they resembled once more a saucy schooner under full sail; and dwindled and shrank to a spot, to a pinhead, and vanished at last from our eyes forever.

Of the various emotions displayed at this time Bessie's was the most odd. For she was moved suddenly to tears, and clasped Lichee to her heart and fondled him, and finally pushed him away from her and ran into the cabin and sat for many hours among the coffins of the dead.

CHAPTER XXVI

AT SEA AGAIN

TO RUN out of Beagle Channel, turn the corner, so to speak, and follow up the eastern coast of South America, embraced but the first principles of navigation; eliminating a perilous repassage of Magellan, or the dangerous gales and seas of Cape Horn. We were now so rich that it mattered little in what port of the civilized world we should first anchor; let it only be the nearest and easiest to reach, and one from which trustworthy steamers sailed, or trains ran.

But the troubles which such a course promised to prevent were inflicted upon us in other ways. Our venture was predestined to trouble; where navigation should have been easy it was made difficult by fog. And in comparison to Chang, Jili was no great sailor; instead of incurring dangers on the side of boldness, he incurred them by caution and procrastination. And instead of feeling his way northward through the fog, he stood day after day straight out to sea.

We weathered a very wicked fifty-hour gale that never so much as lifted a corner of the fog; we came within an ace of running down an uncharted island; and we sprang aleak forward, which, though not an actual menace, obliged us to keep the pumps pretty active. And when at last fine blue sea-weather put in a tardy appearance, and our minds were at rest as to the ship's position, nature, not yet ready to let us go scot free, visited us with the scurvy. Labor that was almost unendurable, and long continuance on a narrow, salty and not particularly nutritious diet, had its usual results; especially the labor.

For those who had worked the hardest were the first to fall sick; while those who had not worked at all escaped. The passengers, or prisoners, continued in excellent health and spirits, with the exception of Carrol; and whatever it was that ailed him, it was not the scurvy; he seemed to suffer more from general languor and loss of appetite than from anything specific, and complained that his whole skeleton was outlined in aches. The women had no touch of the scurvy, nor had Lichee; and my own case of it was more in the nature of a threat than a development.

But the Chinamen, for what reason I do

not know, unless it was that they had endured such cruel labors, displayed no power whatever to resist the disease. Irregular red blotches splotched their emaciated yellow faces; their bones ached, their gums bled; depression, exhaustion, and a disgust of themselves marked them. They were paying an awful price for riches.

It seemed positively wicked not to put the well men to work; but it was a risk that we dared not run; for the Chinamen, though they continued dejectedly to sail the *Shantung*, were in no condition, immensely superior though they were numerically, to handle a spirited mutiny with any certainty. So obvious was this that Kelsey, Brandreth and Swigot begged like so many children to be freed from their bonds and put to work. A dozen times a day they volunteered for work, their eyes gleaming and glistening; and, when denied, it was really comical to see how ill they bore the disappointment.

One thing was certain. We must crack on all sail and make for the nearest fresh vegetables. And to that intent we hauled our wind and steered for Port Pazoo in the Gulf of San Matias. None of us had ever heard of the place; it was not sure we should find there what we sought; and, as the saying is, we were merely taking a chance on it. It was the nearest named settlement that our charts gave, and the wind, blowing strongly and with every appearance of steadiness from the southeast, had not a little to do with the decision.

Shortly after we had made our landfall, Ah Fing died and was sealed in his coffin and laid by the side of his friends and comrades who had gone before. But in spite of this sad ending to a cheerful, useful and laborious life, the effect of sighting land could not but cheer us to the marrow. It looked a green, fertile country; and it served like some potent drug to arrest the course of the scurvy; else must Ah Fing's death have been followed by others, for very sick men are often like sheep about dying. Together they hold out for a while; then one takes the plunge and the others make haste to follow.

Of all our ship's company Carrol alone was not cheered and revivified by the sight of land; for two days he had refused food; and he had all the appearance of a very sick man. Perhaps he realized that any desperate plan he may have formed of rising and taking the schooner at sea was over, and that his game was up.

He spoke, if at all, very quietly and soberly; he seemed to think there was a possibility of his dying; and he was so meek as to express regret for the life he had led, and the deeds he had done. *If* he died, he said, he wished his share of the fifty thousand to go to a charity which he named in Los Angeles; a charity, he said, that his own mother, rest her soul! had founded. I think that in all the seven seas you could not have lighted on a more Christian-spoken man. In the expression of his face, calm, gentle and tolerant, and in the quiet, colorless words of his mouth, with their occasional quaint sanctimonious turns, he was the most vivid illustration, nay illumination, of that ancient saw:

When the devil is sick
  The devil a saint would be;
When the devil is well
  The devil a saint is he.

A pleasant human note, coming as it did from so evil a man, was the pathetic concern exhibited by Kelsey for his fallen leader; and Brandreth and Swigot seemed to have a real tenderness and affection for him. Yet God alone knows what he may ever have done to deserve it at their hands or another's.

We came at last to anchor off the umbrageous little red-roofed settlement called Port Pazoo, and learned within the next twenty minutes, in the person of Don Philip Emanuel Esquada, that the diminutive place maintained a customs and quarantine.

CHAPTER XXVII

DON PHILIP EMANUEL ESQUADA

THERE was nothing Spanish about the little man but his name. For he was a Vermonter by birth, as he made haste to explain, and a dentist by education. He had taken a Spanish name to advance the more quickly politically; and had assumed all the prerogatives of a *bona fide* physician, a profession more lucrative in Port Pazoo than dentistry. The little creature had a bright eye, a dancing step and a prodigious mustache. He was a veritable windbag for loquacity; and yet a man that rang kind and honest; especially to so poor a judge of physiognomy as myself.

"You've got sick aboard?" said he, in his quick, chirping voice of a dickie-bird. "What ails them—scurvy? I'll dose 'em all round and send you out a boat-load of salad. Any other sick? One case? Don't know what it is—eh? Mysterious?—*I* see. I'll have a look at him."

"We're obliged to keep him in confinement, Doctor," said I.

"Mutinous—something of that sort?" he interrupted. "*I* see."

"Well, not that exactly," and I was for giving a certain truthful, if not complete, account of the situation, but Don Philip had not been born with the faculty of listening—at least to me.

"*I* see—*I* see," he said. "Now where is he? Pretty woman, that. Your wife? Your ——"

"No," I shouted, "nothing of the kind!"

"*I* see—*I* see," he said. "Pretty—plump — affectionate — good-natured — big eyes. Now about this mutineer. In the galley—eh? Have the goodness to point him out."

Carrol had rolled over on his face, and was now moaning and breathing very heavily.

"Looks like stomach-ache — roll over, my man—glarey eyes—just put out your tongue — phew! white as chalk — pulse — hum, hum—regular enough at the moment —but weak—very weak. How long have you been feeling bad? Any fever? That's bad. Ever been this way before? Plenty of fat left. —— if I know what's the matter with you, my man."

"Water!" moaned Carrol.

I stepped out of the galley to fetch him a dipperful and when I returned the Doctor was kneeling beside him, and pressing his ear to him here and there as if to listen to the workings of his heart and lungs. But in those few moments a change had come over both Carrol and the Doctor. The Doctor's loquacity had left him, and Carrol had in each cheek a spot of color.

"Here's the water," said I, "and by the Lord Harry, Doctor, your man looks better already."

"Better!" said the Doctor, "not much —he's not better. Look here —" He rose from his knees, and whispered in my ear:

"It's incipient yellow fever, I'm afraid." The little man's voice shook. "It hasn't reached the virulent contagious stage—but it's on the verge. Did you see his tongue? Now you must see what arrangements can be made to quarantine him from the others."

"We must put him ashore," I said.

"Not much, you mustn't," said he. "What do we keep a quarantine for?"

"But," said I, "I never heard of yellow fever coming on this way—and hanging off so long. Why, the man's been complaining for weeks!"

"There are twenty forms of yellow fever," said the Doctor. "This is one of them. And by the way, if you'll muster the crew, I'll —" He seemed unaccountably agitated, and I attributed this to his personal fear of taking the fever from Carrol. "I'll,"—he said,—"I'll dose them, all round. Tell them to go into the forecastle and lie down in their bunks; I've some strong specific here, and it's best to rest after taking it."

It wasn't very difficult to persuade the Chinamen to lie down; they were very tired, poor fellows, sick and listless. Jili, especially, looked to be at death's door. They drank a tumbler apiece of the medicine the Doctor had mixed for them; made no complaint of its taste, which he said they would find bitter and disagreeable; and one and all turned their faces to the wall and lay like dead men.

"Now, boys," said the Doctor, "that medicine will begin to burn presently, but don't mind—that only shows it's working. Now, Mr. Parrish, I've mixed a glass for you, too."

"No, no," I said, "a little fresh salad will fix me. There's not anything really the matter with me."

Jili turned his face toward us, attempted to smile, and, rubbing his abdomen with one hand, "Him burn all same fire," he said.

"That's right—that's right," said the Doctor. "The more it burns now, the quicker it will stop burning." He seemed unduly agitated, and in a great hurry to get on deck into the open air.

"It's too close for me," he said, "down here."

I followed him up the ladder. Bessie, holding Lichee by one hand, was waiting for us.

"Have you given them some medicine, Doctor?" she asked.

"Yes—yes," he said hastily, "but I must ask you to make that child scarce. You've a case of yellow fever aboard—the man Carrol—better go into the cabin until we've made arrangements for disinfection, and so forth. Excuse me, Mr. Parrish, I must send my boat ashore for a supply of vegetables."

He gave an order to the men who had rowed him out, and they cast loose and pushed away toward the landing.

"Now, then," said the Doctor, "I'll have another look at Carrol."

This time I did not accompany him into the galley, but stood idly looking at the distant town, longing to stroll about its shady streets and to eat myself sick with its fresh fruits. Presently I heard what sounded like a groan. I turned—and saw the face of Jili half out of the forecastle hatchway. His chin was turned forward and up; and his eyes were frightfully rolling; a steady, humming sound of moaning and groaning seemed to pass him, coming from the forecastle and spreading into the open air. Jili's thin hands clutched the edge of the hatchway, and he seemed to be making semi-conscious efforts to drag himself upon the deck. Then, as I looked, his head rolled farther and farther back, his hands relaxed their hold, and he fell suddenly out of sight.

I sprang into the galley to call the Doctor. But before I could speak his name I was thrown violently to the floor, beaten about the head, and bound, hand and foot, and chucked into a corner.

Carrol stood over me, smiling.

"Wonderful man, the Doctor!" he said. "Cures me, puts the Chinks out of their pain, and now look at him!" I heard the sounds that accompany sea-sickness, and, turning my head, saw the little Doctor bending over double and convulsed by nausea.

"Luckily," said Carrol, "he kept his nerve until he'd done the trick. Brandreth, go and batten down the forecastle hatch. The Chinks ought to be quiet enough by now, but you never can tell. Swigot, you and Kelsey take some of these rope-ends and make the women fast. As for me—my God! I *eat!* Jim—Jim," he said, "it takes a nerve to starve yourself sick!" He burst out laughing. "And you thought I had the yellow fever, did you? Buck up there, Doctor. You played your part to perfection. I give you a mark of ten, as the boys say."

All this while he was ransacking the galley for food and cramming such as he found into his ravenous mouth.

"And so, Jim," said he, "you wouldn't take your medicine like a man? You were so —— fond of those yellow friends of yours that I thought you'd like to go with them, *wherever* they've gone."

"Was it poison you gave them?" I faltered.

"*Was* it poison!" and he slapped his thighs as if an excellent joke had been passed. "And what would we give them—soothing sirup?"

"God!" I moaned, and then I am afraid I cried a little, what between horror and fear, for I could not but think that my own end was near at hand. And almost I wished that I had drunk of the poison lest a worse fate befall.

Presently Kelsey poked his head in at the door.

"Kelsey, sir," said he, "to report that the ladies has been secured."

"Ah!" said Carrol, "and they sent me their love, I calculate."

"Well, not Bess, sir," said Kelsey. "But Little Spanish—she said to say as how she was always all yours."

"Well," said Carrol, "since all's shipshape, I guess we better get up the hook and make sail. Cheer up, Doctor—there's a million of gold belonging to you on this ship, and that ought to be heavy enough to keep food on your stomach. Jim,"—he turned at the door, "don't look so silly—you'll be well treated; you'll even have those ropes taken off when we are out of sight of land."

An hour later the *Shantung* was standing once more for open sea. Carrol came into the galley and cut the ropes which bound me.

"You're wanted on deck," said he.

"Why?" said I.

"To help throw the dead overboard," said he. "The forecastle's all cluttered up with them, and so's the cabin."

"Bessie?" I half asked.

"Still showing fight," said he. "My God, man! you're not in love with the woman, are you? Because if you are—well, —— if I don't begin to feel sorry for you!"

"When are you going to finish with me?" I asked.

"Why, this is my plan," he said in a confidential tone, "and you'll agree it's a good one. We're going to lay a course for Rio, and some time between now and landfall we shall expect you to make yourself scarce

—that's all. God knows I've enough murders on my conscience to last me, and I don't want another. So, Jim, any time you don't like your company you can either get a prescription from the Doctor or—jump."

"Thank you," I said.

"And meanwhile," said he, "you will be free daytimes to go and come as you like; to eat with us, and to steep your sense of the picturesque in such bacchanalian scenes as are liable to occur from time to time. Boys will be boys!" said he. "And now let us bury the dead!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

WAITING

SINCE I was allowed to come and go as I pleased, I passed the rest of the day with the women and Lichee in the cabin. They were no longer bound, but had been forbidden the deck under pain of death, it being the intention, I suppose, to reduce them to quiet submission by this and other bullying methods. And woful as was my own perspective fate, I am happy to think that at this time my thoughts were mostly for them. I was to die, before very long, by my own hand, according to Carrol's calculations; but Bessie and Carmen were to furnish sport before their necks were wrung for them; and dreadful as that thought must have been to them, yet I think it was more dreadful to me.

And I was resolved that when the time came, when the first violence was offered to one or the other, I would choose that moment for my enforced act of suicide. But it should not be a meek and sheepish finale. Man of peace that I was, I was determined to go warlikely out of the world, with blood upon my hands.

"I tell you," said Carmen, "for to kill that man long time ago. You not do it, an' now I say, 'I tol' you so.' "

"We were fools!" I said.

"And now what become of us woman, I ask?"

"Now look here," said Bessie, her face haggard and white with grief, but the luster and shining quality of her eyes undimmed, "one thing at a time. We're not threatened at the moment, and won't be as long as this wind holds. For God's sake let's have no post-mortems, or ante-mortems. Let's either get together and think a way out, or let's pass these last hours cheerfully."

"I think sometimes," said Carmen, "I run out and jump into the water."

"I think of that, too," said Bessie. "But so long as they don't hurt Lichee I'm going to hold on to life as hard as I can—no matter what happens. What difference does it make? I'm low enough by all human rules; and I'm ready to step lower—yes, smiling—if only there's an off chance that they'll sicken of me and not hurt the boy and put us ashore somewhere."

"There's no chance they do that," said Carmen, "not me. They let us go—we tell on them pretty quick. They not let *that* happen!"

"No," said Bessie, "it's just a pipe-dream—but my little boy—he can't hurt them—he can't bear witness against them— He couldn't, could he, Jim?"

"Not legally," I said. "But don't you worry about him, Bessie—we're full grown and can stand anything, and must, I dare say; but there must be a white spot in every man; and I believe that Carrol's got a speck of a one. Honestly, I think he won't hurt the boy."

The cabin floor was strongly pitched to port, owing to the deep keeling of the *Shantung*. Its angle was as a barometer of danger or safety. Let it but keep its pitch indefinitely, and the women were indefinitely safe, for our captors would need every man among them to sail the ship; but let the wind fall and the cabin floor swing back to the level, then, I made sure, other matters would at once occupy their minds. But all that afternoon of waiting and thinking out desperate and futile stratagems the boards maintained their sharp slant, only varying it with the pitch and roll of the vessel; but toward sundown the general angle began sensibly to diminish, and it was evident that the wind had begun to fall.

"Wind 's falling, Jim," said Bessie.

"Yes, Bessie," I said.

"Well," she controlled her voice with some difficulty, "dear old Jim, we've been good pals. You've liked me in spite of the black marks, and I've liked you, God knows how much!"

Carmen rose, walked to the cabin port and stood looking out upon the sea; in a corner—that same occupied by Chang in his coffin—Lichee lay sleeping and curled into a ball.

"Jim," said Bessie, "we've all got to die some time,—and the thing I mind most about what's going to happen to me is—oh, well—that you should be alive to know about it."

"Bessie," I said "Bessie dear—I'm a weakling, God knows—but if that's all that's worrying you! The first hand that is laid on you is the signal I'm waiting for. I step out of the world then, Bess—but not alone, I hope. Having lived so long without my just share of strength and manliness, it may be that at the last the Lord will make me strong for a minute or two. I have been thinking about it hard all day—how best to go at it, and all that—and I think that if I'm very quick, and very sudden, maybe I can get my thumbs into Carrol's eyes, and kill him, before the rest can brush me off. Anyway, that is how I shall try to—to enter my final protest—that is, unless I can snatch a weapon from one of them."

"Jim," said she, "would you rather I died fighting—or is it really nothing to you one way or the other?"

"Bessie," I said, and I took her hand in mine, "it's so much to me that almost I think I would. But if your boy is to be let off at last—why then, my dear—then I think you mustn't die."

She bowed her head gravely. Then caught my hand to her lips and kissed it.

"God help us all!" said she.

CHAPTER XXIX

SPIRITS OF LAVENDER

WITH the falling of night there came a dead calm. Lichee still slept in his corner; while Bessie and Carmen and I sat in silence—and waited. It grew darker and darker, but still our captors gave no sign. At last, however, we heard steps upon the deck without, and presently the cabin door was thrust sharply ajar, and Carrol, carrying a lantern, appeared in the opening.

"What," said he, "no lights? Tactful, but cheerless. Well, my hearties, how goes it?"

He strode in and, having thrust the lantern almost into our white faces and laughed, he stood it with a clatter upon the table.

"Now, then," said he, "light up and set the table. We've had a hard day of it, and we're going to have a bang-up dinner and pass the time with laughter and song. How's the ship fixed for drinkables?"

"There's water," said Bessie, "and whisky and red wine—Spanish Red——"

"Spanish Red!" exclaimed Carrol, smacking his lips. "Where is it?"

"In the wine-locker," said Bessie, "under the lower berth in the port stateroom—in there," and she nodded in the direction of the closed stateroom door. "Here's the key." She unslung it from her neck and held it out to him.

"You know where the stuff is," said Carrol. "I appoint you cup-bearer. Put out a dozen bottles."

Bessie flung the key on the floor.

"Now, my dearest dear," said Carrol, "don't be a fool."

Carmen leaned over suddenly and picked up the key.

"I get him," she said.

"That's right!" said Carrol heartily. "There's a sensible girl. She knows which side her bread's buttered," and he turned on his heel and strolled out.

Bessie turned coldly to Carmen.

"After all your hot talk about what you'd do to Carrol—you're a pretty weak sister, I must say!"

But Carmen smiled—almost laughed. And she bent down and whispered so that both Bessie and I could hear.

"There is one chance," she said, "only laugh—an' be gay, an' set that table."

"A chance!" I exclaimed.

"Better I not say a thing," said Carmen. "But look—I smile—almos' I am happy; I ask you, if you hopes for paradise, you set that-a table—an' leave my little plan all to me."

"Bessie," said I, "this is a straw, but what's good enough for one drowning person ought to be good enough for another. Let's set the table."

"That is fine," said Carmen, "that is fine."

And she unlocked the stateroom door and went in, shutting it after her. Presently we heard her striking a match.

Half an hour later the table was set, the cabin lamps shone brightly upon the white cloth, and there came Swigot and the Doctor, the latter looking much the worse for wear, bearing smoking dishes from the galley. Carrol came in next, and last of all Brandreth and Kelsey. The latter had wet and slicked down his sparse hairs for the occasion; and Brandreth had gone so far as to shave his beard.

Carrol seated himself at the head of the table, forcing Bessie to sit at his right hand. Lichee, his eyes heavy with sleep, came next to his mother; then Kelsey, Brandreth, myself, the Doctor and Swigot. The place at Carrol's left was for Carmen, but she did not at once take it.

"I am waiter," she said; "I pass them dishes, and pass that wine."

One by one we served ourselves from a tureen of bean soup that Carmen, laughing noisily, handed the rounds of the table. Then, stepping to a kind of sideboard that had been rigged, she took from it a bottle of wine, wrapped in a napkin, and went once more the round of the table filling the men's glasses.

"Good girl," said Carrol. "And now, my happy family—here's luck!"

He tossed off his glass of wine at one gulp, and held it out to Carmen to be refilled. Warmed by the generous liquor, he laughed aloud and, catching Carmen playfully round the waist, drew her on to his knee; she giggled, resisted, but went to him willingly enough, as it seemed.

"That wine smells funny to me," said the little Doctor.

"Were you speaking to me?" I said coldly. "I didn't taste it."

"Nor I," said he, "it's gone bad."

Swigot rose suddenly from his place.

"I feel kind 'er giddy," he said. "It's the smell of the lamps." He went out into the fresh air.

"Funny!" said Kelsey, "I feel sort of giddy—I've got a gripe in me stummick."

From her perch on Carrol's knee Carmen smiled toward the speaker.

"Maybe," she said, "you take one, two drop spirit of lavender, you feel better. You not remember? You have little bottle label spirit of lavender?"

Kelsey rose to his feet with a sharp cry of terror and anguish.

"What's the matter?" cried Carrol sharply.

"The matter!" cried Kelsey. "My God! —my God! the woman has poisoned us, and we are all dead men!"

"Is that true?" cried Carrol in an awful voice. He rose unsteadily, casting Carmen violently from him.

"True," she said, "it is as true as Roy Cunningham look down from heaven know—you have drunk, an' you an' you, an' now your dam' soul go howling into hell!"

Carrol caught up the empty bottle of wine by the neck and, swinging it over his shoulder, hurled it with frightful velocity into the woman's face. She dropped with a sound of shattered glass and——

"Go first!" he shouted. And the next second I had felled him with the chair upon which I had been sitting, and snatching a blunt knife from the table forced it somehow through his right eye into his brain.

Then I rose, still howling like a wild beast with fury and indignation; but there was no need of any further effort. Kelsey and Brandreth were in convulsions on the floor; Swigot had not come back, and was undoubtedly suffering his last throes, like a poisoned rat, in some corner of the ship. The Doctor alone, who had not touched the wine, sat stiffly in his place. He was blue with fear. Bessie, holding Lichee by the hand, had backed against the wall. Carmen had not moved.

Gradually the horrid sounds that came from my throat ceased, and I ran to Bessie, sobbing aloud, as a child runs to its nurse.

"Buck up, Jim!" she said. "Buck up! We're not out of the woods yet. Never mind—there! You look out for Lichee, and I'll clean the slate."

She darted around the table and caught the little Doctor by the shoulders and dragged him from his chair.

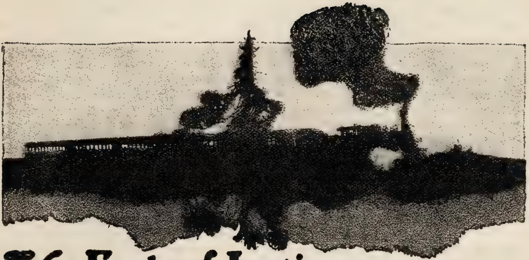
"Now, my little bomb," she cried, "you've burst once on this ship, and done quite some damage, but you'll never burst again! Overboard you go!" And she began to force him toward the cabin door. They disappeared, struggling violently, the strong, deep-chested woman and the weak, spindle-shanked man. One wild cry rang in my ears.

A moment later Bessie, breathing hard, stood once more beside me.

"Jim," she said, "it's all over now, and unless you and Lichee and I play each other false—why, all's well. The money's ours now—and there ought to be bright days coming to us all. Lichee, you monkey, you be fine rich Melican man some day. And Jim—Jim——"

Here Bessie broke down, and sobbed, and I, catching her in my arms, had at that moment no memory of any other woman.

The End



The Ends of Justice

by C. Langton Clarke

WHEN the "Blue Racer," pride of the Grand Pacific, by whose comings and goings dwellers on the plains set their clocks, roared into the freight division yards at Shallow Creek the hand of the fireman was on the lever, and the engineer, a limp huddle of blue jeans and grime, lay on the floor of the cab.

Five minutes later strong hands had borne the body into the agent's little parlor, and the white-faced fireman was telling his story to a sympathetic circle.

"There he sat," said the fireman, "with his head outen the winder same as usual, an' as nat'ral as life, an' I never suspicioned anything was wrong till he hit the seven degree on the big trestle at the Forks without checkin' her a notch or shovin' a spoonful of air on the shoes. When I grabbed him he jest went all together like a busted balloon. Heart failure, I guess. He'd been talkin' of layin' off a while with a pain in his side this two weeks."

"He was a good man, was Denis Hagarty," said one of the bystanders.

"He was," said Stevens, the division superintendent. "As good a man as ever poured oil into a cup, but Denis's virtues ain't going to get the Blue Racer into Wylie on schedule. Who've you got can take her through?" he added sharply, turning to the master mechanic, Eben Burt.

"Dick Toft," Burt replied shortly. "Only man I'd trust her to. Pulled in half an hour ago, and up at the roundhouse now, turning in his engine."

"What—'Old Faithful'?" said Stevens. "I reckon you're right. He'll kick at going out again."

"Kick? He wouldn't kick if I told him to shove his head into the fire."

The wipers were busy on his engine when Dick Toft, thick-set, black-bearded and mahogany-visaged, left the roundhouse and butted into Burt, who gave him curt orders to take Number 6 on to Wylie.

To a younger or more ambitious man the opportunity of pulling a lever on the fastest flyer on the continent would have been compensation enough for foregoing bed and board, but Dick was growing old, and ambition had sickened on that dreadful night when the detectives came hunting for his son, now a fugitive and an outcast, and had died outright when, a year later, he laid his daughter, the pride of his heart, beside the wife, who was now little more than a memory. A lonely, self-centered man was Dick, looking the world square in the eye without malice or envy, but without friendliness, and living out his life in boarding-house and engine-cab, without a grumble and without a hope.

But careless as he was of his own advancement, one compensating virtue, like granite bedrock, underlay the barren levels of his life—a dog-like loyalty to his masters, and a rigid, unswerving adherence to what he held to be his duty. Eben Burt had not exaggerated. Dick Toft had thrust his head into the fire before at the word of his superiors. In the great strike, when every wheel on the system was tied hard and fast by half a dozen words on a slip of yellow paper, he alone stood by the company, ran his engine through a yelling mob without the quiver of an eyelash, went down with her in the ruins of Dry Run trestle and was carried back to be pieced together by the company surgeon, uncomplaining and looking for no reward.

Two years later, when the fires were licking up the grass-lands between South Bend and the Magpie in hundred-acre mouthfuls, Number 24, Special East, two hundred thousand dollars' worth between pilot and tail-lamps, with Dick Toft in the cab, halted abreast of a small slough with two walls of flame arching the track ahead, and another, half a mile wide, galloping like a race-horse to cut off her retreat. The train crew broke for water, but Dick, a spanner in his fist and words of wrath upon his lips, held his fireman to his shovel and brought his train through with the paint curling on the cars and the rails fairly buckling under the drivers.

He went into hospital, looking like a singed cat, and came out a week later, to turn down the hand of his recreant conductor, who had thought more of saving his own skin than the property of the company.

"Old Faithful" he was called from one end of the division to the other, and the men, while they respected him for his devotion, regarded it tolerantly, as a mild form of mania.

SO DICK trudged back by the side of his superior and swung himself up the side of the huge shining machine, which throbbed with impatience at the delay, like a thing animate.

"Be careful, Dick," said Stevens, as he hung on the engine step, "but not too—— careful, you know."

The old man grunted, and the flyer swept through the packed freight-yards and out into the gathering dusk on the plains. With twenty minutes to wipe off and a forty-mile tangent ahead of him, Old Faithful opened her out and let her hum. Even to his seasoned experience there was a sense of exhilaration in the swift movement and the smooth following of that string of dark-blue cars, an agreeable variation from the rattle and bump of the freights he had been hauling over the same track so many years.

It was late Fall, and the sting of coming Winter was in the wind that whipped the cab windows; Dick thrust out his head and let it beat upon his forehead. It was full twenty hours since he last kicked the sheet off, and he was tired—dog-tired, but the company wanted him, and there was no protest, even in his mind.

Presently the stars popped out, clear and unwinking, and the moon lifted herself, full-faced, above a ridge of scrub poplar, making the twin lines of steel shine like silver ribbons.

At the long curve which sweeps the base of Dead Squaw Hill, Dick checked her up a notch and looked at his watch. Five minutes of the deficit wiped off. He held out the dial to the fireman.

"Good business!" roared the other. "We'll do it all right, all right." And he bent again over his shovel.

But alas for man's calculations! As the Blue Racer leaped out upon the long tangent, a red light zigzagged frantically across the track a hundred yards ahead, and with something very like an oath Dick shut her off and threw the air hard.

"What's up?" he asked sharply as the man with the lantern came running up. He did not notice two figures which rose up from the right of way and closed in on his train.

The man sprang swiftly up the steps into the gangway and a pair of forty-fives covered engineer and fireman.

"Hands up!" he said with a coarse laugh. "That's what!"

Under certain circumstances the interior of a forty-five revolver looks as big as the inside of a tomato-can, and the bravest realizes that he had best obey orders, so two pairs of hands were promptly raised aloft. The fireman was white with fear, but on the face of Old Faithful was a black scowl of wrath.

The intruder was short of stature and strongly built. The upper part of his face was hidden by a mask, and the lower covered by a coarse black beard and mustache. From the angle of the right nostril to the lobe of the ear a puckered white scar cut the cheek horizontally.

As he faced the engineer he uttered a slight exclamation and his arm dropped half way to his side, but with an oath he steadied the muzzle back on the breast of the blue jumper.

"No monkey business with me!" he said roughly.

The eyes of Old Faithful were glued on the unsightly scar.

"A brave sight, this, for the eyes of the man that begot you, James Toft!" he said. "When Black Murphy split your face with the ax in Daly's, I would to God he had struck six inches higher!"

The other laughed uneasily.

"I wasn't reckoning on meeting you, an' that's the naked truth," he said. "I haven't been keepin' tab on the comp'ny's circulars this while back, an' didn't know my daddy'd got promotion. Where's Denis?"

"Denis Hagarty died in this cab two hours ago," the old man said sternly.

"Well, don't you be a —— fool an' do the same thing!" the son replied meaningly.

For full five minutes father and son looked into each other's eyes, while the fireman stared helplessly from one to the other. Then from back of the tender came the sound of a pistol-shot and a cry of agony.

"You murderous dogs!" said the engineer fiercely. "What was that?"

"Reckon somebody's got hurt," the other responded. "You keep still."

The brutal laugh which accompanied the words, the insolent note of command, pricked the old man's courage like a spur. The half-veiled face, with its sneering lip and unsightly brand of evil painted clear against the night by the light streaming from the half-opened door of the furnace, filled him with a loathing unspeakable. With a swift indrawing of breath and a gritting of teeth he ducked down and sideways and leaped in on his son.

A bullet starred the plating between the gauges, but before the graceless villain could draw trigger again a knotted fist went fairly home among the black bristles on his chin, and James Toft dropped in a heap, striking his head against the tender and knocking out what little sense his father's blow had left in him.

"The bell-rope—quick!" Dick snarled, and, snatching the spare hank from the fireman he bent over the prostrate form. In another minute the arms and legs of the unconscious train-robber were held in a close-embracing hempen spiral.

With swift, untrembling fingers the engineer stripped off his jumper and, plucking the mask from the white face at his feet, bound it about his own eyes. The broad-brimmed hat and heavy guns lay in the gangway where his son had fallen, and he picked them up. His eyes shone strangely through the holes in the black crape, and the fireman trembled.

"What are you going to do?" he asked in a voice scarcely audible above the drumming of the imprisoned steam.

"My duty," replied Old Faithful. "Bide you here."

He said no more, but dropped down the side of his engine and crunched his way back along the ballast.

As he came abreast of the tender, two masked men leaped from the express-car and came toward him. Looking past them he could see the conductor standing by the forward sleeper, hands above his head. A thread of smoke hung in the door of the express-car. Little more than an arm's-length away one of the men addressed him.

"Why in —— don't you obey orders, Jim?" he demanded sharply. "What are you here for?"

"This!" said Dick curtly.

He laid the muzzles of his guns against the breasts before him and pulled the triggers. Both men went down, one man limp and silent, the other with a horrid writhe and yell. True to his upbringing, he tried a shot as he fell, and ripped a furrow in Dick's beard, but before he could fire again the engineer's cowhide boot took him square on the jaw, and when he touched ground he was practically a dead man.

From the interior of the express-car came the shattering sound of an explosion. Half a dozen boards cracked and broke outwards and a whirl of pungent smoke bellied out into the frosty air.

Dick tore the mask from his face and yelled at the conductor.

"Come here, you blamed fool!" he cried. "Are you going to stand there all night?"

Bewildered, the other advanced. His hands were still in the air, but he dropped them as he recognized the engineer.

"*You?*" he gasped, looking helplessly from the sturdy, menacing figure to the sprawling forms on the ballast.

"Pull your wits together, Bill Haney!" Dick cried impatiently. "Are there any others back there?"

Haney shook his head. "Just them two," he said. "They went through the cars first, and put the fear of God on my passengers. Then they brought me forward. And you—how did they pull you up? Is the track blocked?" With a hand to his cap, he leaned outwards and peered ahead.

"Red light," the engineer responded curtly. "But the man that showed it will never swing lantern again."

"Is he dead?" Haney asked.

"Not yet," was the grim reply. "He lies on the floor of my cab with a good rope about his arms and legs. It will be around his neck before long—God help me!"

A spasm of agony, mastered in a moment, distorted the old man's features.

"Do ye know him?" the conductor inquired, staring hard.

The answer was long in coming. The steel-gray eyes under the penthouse brows stared steadily down the string of lighted coaches.

"He is my own son," the engineer said at last.

"Holy Heaven!" Haney cried, recoiling before a tragedy so much grimmer than he had dreamed of. "And—and what are you going to do?"

"My duty!" answered Old Faithful sternly. "He goes into the hands of the sheriff at South Bend."

Words of sympathy, protest, advice, rose to Haney's lips, but died against the granite wall of the other's resolution, and he followed him meekly as he clambered into the express-car and made a hasty examination.

The explosion had severely wrenched the safe, but the door still held fast. At the farther end of the car the body of the messenger lay stretched. There was a bullet-hole in the center of his forehead and it needed no expert in gunshot-wounds to tell that he must have died almost on his feet.

When the two dropped out on the ballast again the heads of excited passengers were poking out of the coach windows, and several scared train-hands were making their way forward.

"Get the bodies into the car, Haney, and herd your passengers," Dick said shortly. "I wait for no one. We've lost time enough already."

He turned his back on the scene of his exploit and tramped back to his engine and the company of his doomed son.

* * *

THE Blue Racer sped onward through the night. Back in the cars the passengers discussed a testimonial and an address. Forward the engineer sat on his leathern seat and stared grimly ahead. Mile after mile the giant wheels devoured, but his eyes never wandered from track and gauge to the log-like figure beneath him. The fireman, feverishly shoveling coal, glanced furtively at it now and again, but the father not at all.

Presently consciousness returned. James Toft shivered, sighed and opened his eyes. There was a roar like thunder in his ears, a hot blast beat upon him from the open door of the furnace, and a yard away a coal-grimed, sweaty face shone in the white radiance. Had he awakened in hell?

He uttered a faint cry and strove to move his cramped limbs, but the coils were wound and the knots tied by a cunning hand, and he was powerless. Then memory came, and he knew what had happened and where he lay. He had played his cards badly and the game had gone against him, but he might yet save his own stake.

"Father!" he cried.

There was no response, and he repeated the cry twice, with a sort of whining insistence.

The fireman timidly touched the old man's elbow.

"He's speakin' to you," he said.

"D'ye think I didn't hear him?" the engineer answered in a hard voice. "He is no son of mine. Tell him that I will have no truck with him. Tell him that at South Bend he goes into the hands of the sheriff, to deal with as the law says. Bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh he may be—more shame for me—but I do my duty."

"Duty!" sneered the son. "Maybe if you'd thought less of what you call your duty, I'd 'a' been different."

Dick answered no word, and the other twisted his head round to the fireman.

"Here, you," he gasped. "You seem a decent kind. Feel in my vest pocket and take out what you find there."

The fireman glanced at his superior, and, reading neither protest nor consent on the graven mask, complied, and took out a small oblong case of cheap frayed leather.

"Open it!" said the bound man, and the

fireman again obeyed. Inside was the tintype of a girl, barely in her teens, a round-faced lass, with curly hair hanging on her shoulders.

"Give it to him!" James Toft cried fiercely. "Hold it up before his eyes if he won't take it. Let him look at the picture of his dead girl, that I've carried about with me, good days and bad days, for ten years, and wouldn't part with it for all the gold in the safe back yonder. She cared about me if no one else ever did. Let *her* speak for me!"

The fireman held out the portrait, and the engineer took it mechanically from his hand. As he gazed on the features of his dead child a mist gathered before his eyes, and on the face of the mist moved the shadows of the past. A heavy tear cut the grime on the lined face, and the fireman, a sympathetic man, with children of his own, saw, and swept a blue sleeve across his eyes.

Dick snapped the case shut and handed it back to his subordinate.

"Put it where you found it," he said. "Let him have something good about him for the time he has to live."

"D'ye mean to say you're goin' to give me up?" the son cried brokenly.

The father made no reply, and the other, searching his face with the half-pitiful, half-defiant look of a trapped animal, saw no softening of the grim lines, no relenting in the steady, steely eyes. Only the knuckles of the hand upon the lever were white with the strength of its grip

"—— you!" the son cried fiercely, "—— you for an unnatural father! May every curse ——"

The fireman laid a heavy hand upon his mouth, and he groaned and fell silent, dully staring at the squat image of fate perched above him, and counting the rhythmical hammering of the great drivers on the rail-joints as they swept him onward to the scaffold.

THREE miles from the Horseshoe Dick thrust into his pocket, pulled out knife and tobacco, and carefully shredded a pipeful, while the fireman watched him, wondering. He filled the old briar which lay on the sill of the cab window, laid the plug and the knife, still open, on the seat behind him, and looked at his watch.

"Thirty-five minutes to make up," he said, "and we'll have to lose a couple more in the cut."

"In the Horseshoe?" the fireman queried. He looked at the shining blade on the seat, then back at the engineer, and the eyes of the two men met in a long, steady stare.

"In the Horseshoe," Dick repeated, raising his voice. "There was half a ton of rock on the track last week, and I can't take no chances with a trainload of passengers. I'll have to slow her down."

He turned away his face, and the fireman bent to his shovel again.

"The cut ain't more'n half a mile away," he said with great distinctness.

Dick nodded, shut off steam and, with his hand on the air-lever, thrust head and shoulders out of the window. The fireman leaned across the prostrate figure and picked up the knife. When he replaced it, two newly severed ends of plaited rope lay on the floor.

"Lively now!" he said. "You won't get another chanct. This is the Horseshoe."

The air hissed like a serpent, and the flyer trembled throughout her length as the shoes closed on the wheels. James Toft shook himself free from the coils, slipped past the fireman, swung around the edge of the cab and was gone.

With a well-simulated yell of surprise the fireman beat his fist on Dick's leg.

"He's away!" he cried. "He's escaped!"

"Escaped?" repeated the engineer, avoiding the other's eyes.

"Got clean off!" continued the fireman, speaking with great rapidity of utterance. "He must have worked them ropes loose, and lay there watching his chanct. It come when you slowed, an' he took it. Slipped past me like a ghost, afore I could ketch him."

"Thank God!" said Dick in his beard.

He looked at the rope on the floor, and his gaze dwelt on the severed ends. With a sudden impulse he held out his hand, and the fireman gripped it hard.

"Reckon he may do better for this lesson," the latter said with a half sob. Then he, too, looked at the tell-tale rope.

"Guess this ain't much good to nobody now," he said, and kicked it out into the darkness.

The SMOOTH BORE HERMANOS

by Carl Henry

THE bullet went out through the open window at my elbow and doubtless it startled the fish at the top of the water in the moonlight out there in the Bay of Panama.

The smoke floated up from the muzzle of the Mannleicher till it struck the ceiling of Jimmie Hope's lounging-den and then it umbrellaed out till it mingled with dense blue vapor ascending from the cigars and cigarettes of the twenty adventurers, filibusters, beachcombers and other human rag-tags and bob-tails gathered in the place.

Not a man stirred. No one said anything. Bob Cespinoza, playing chess with Goldtooth Naegel, advanced the queen, after glancing up. Yet they say the tropics get your nerves.

The man who held the Mannleicher that had let out the splurging roar was a bit unsteady on his legs and was very white as he looked around expecting some one to fall, but he was an Englishman arrived that day. He handed the piece he had accidentally discharged to Jimmie Hope, who had been showing him his collection, bits from various revolutions he had had a hand in, and Jimmie, instead of hanging it up once more, looked at it with a grim smile and passed his cognac bottle to the Englishman, saying to me half-dolefully, half-quizzically:

"If that had killed you, Captain, it would have been the biggest joke in Panama."

"Oh, it would, would it?" said I.

"How's that, Jimmie?" asked one of the boys.

Jimmie Hope leaned back against the table, drew up one knee and broke the piece, then held it up to the light.

"See what it is? Smooth as the cheek of a Yucateco baby. An old-fashioned Belgian nigger-killer, mighty nearly open at both ends. That old smooth-bore has been through one war, a *coup d'état* with some shooting, and several other occasions when it might have been used, and yet, never dreaming it was loaded, I hung it up there with the very load in it that I put in it twelve years ago—see the copper shell and that nick on the welt—when I first handed it to one of the Smooth-bore Hermanos."

"Haw-haw-he-he! I seen them guys," laughed McTighe. "Say, was that you that had 'em, Jimmie? I'd like to hear the straight of it."

"Well, they are so tangled up with the history of a president or two still kicking that you fellows won't mind if I skip a name now and then. I landed in New York by way of Antwerp one day with forty-two cases of Mausers and all that goes with them down in the pelvic regions of the same ship that brought me. They were invoiced as 'angles,' meaning small structural steel parts, and they were sure enough structural when we got through with them—the best republic-builders I ever saw.

"I got them through customs and over to Brooklyn to storage alongside the Erie Basin where a schooner by the name of the *Fortuna* lay freshly scraped and dressed as if for a wedding. General Mena-Mena—the fellow that ran Carteret through for writing 'Tekel-Upharsin' after his name on the register of the Hotel du Monde in Paris—had given me the $50,000 gold in Havana to do the work with and he was to have the schooner and men ready. I did not know who was the candidate and would not know till Willemstadt.

"IT WAS a January night and cold and wet. The men came aboard in fives and sixes up to the number of ninety, nearly all recruits off the park benches, and about midnight we were ready to ease out into the stream. I had given orders to let go, when I heard voices up the dock and running feet.

"Everybody was below. All lights were out and I jumped to the plank, a machete in my hand.

" 'Stop! Abie, stop! *Please* don't make it!' I heard some one say out of breath. From the sounds there was one man chasing another down the dock.

" 'I *vill* make it! Vy not?' answered the first man.

"Then the second man caught him and tried to hold him.

" 'Let me go, Joey, I have got to make it a soocide!'

" 'Please not to do it, Abie!'

"But Abie jumped and pulled Joey with him. Instead of hitting the water they landed about eight feet down on the tarpaulins, lines and bitts of the port quarter of the *Fortuna* and, kicking and fighting, rolled over and over on the deck.

"The mate did the proper thing. He threw a tarpaulin over them to smother the noise and dropped them down the hatch. It sounded too much like a piece of shanghai to suit a quiet, home-loving filibuster like me. A fuss like that would have brought a watchman or a policeman in no time. I did not have any time to investigate just then and it was only when we were safe beyond Scotland light, about daylight, that I went below to see who our two recruits were.

"I don't often get a good laugh, but I did that morning. Still half rolled in the tarpaulin, they were fast in each other's arms, asleep like the babes in the wood. Nature had been too strong for all their fears, but to avoid being stolen away from each other they had tied their suspenders together in impossible knots.

" 'Here you, wake up!' I yelled at them, tickling their noses with a frayed rope's-end. They were two little red-headed, smooth faced, much freckled Russian Jews, just such as you can find in regiments in Rutgers Park. Both were dressed in their best of light checked suits, and a flower much mussed and withered was in one's lapel.

" 'What are your names? Wake up. Answer me.'

"The one in the green suit was hit with the trembles and tried to crawl under the tarpaulin, but I yanked him back by his heels. The other rolled his eyes, scared to death, but he could talk:

" 'Oh, gentleman, oh, Mister Pirate, please not to hurt Joey!'

" 'Joey who?'

" 'Joseph Berkintowitz, my brutter.'

" 'What's your name?'

" 'Abraham Berkintowitz, please, and I am his brutter.'

" 'Oh, each is the other's brother. How nice. Say, what did you mean by jumping on this boat last night just as we were sailing?'

" 'Oh, and please make it not to be mad, Mister Pirate. Him and me was to my vedding and ven I comes by getting her vedding dowry, six hundred dollars is it, her fadder he makes me a note by t'ree fifty, and my brutter was so sad for me he makes it a soocide, but ve fell across ven ve make a fall down at the vatter and ve fall over on you, Mister Pirate.'

" 'I'm not a pirate. I am a soldier. This ship is loaded with men going to war and now that you are here you must go along.'

" 'Ve go to *var!* Ve don't vant to look at it.'

" 'You are not to *look* at it. You are going to help with the chores on battle days.'

" 'Battle! battle! Abie and me got to be varriors and get shooted! *I'll* make it a resignation if Abie don't.'

" 'But you can't resign. We didn't ask you to jump on this ship. We didn't know you didn't want to go along and be heroes and fight, bleed and die for liberty, glory and bags full of gold.'

" 'How much gold does a warrior get if he bleeds but don't die?' he asked.

" 'That gave me a glimmer of an idea to have some fun, and of all the ideas I ever had there was never one that I ought not to have forgotten and buried in the dead past quick. However, the only man who can do without experience is a prophet. Captain Duncan, the master of the *Fortuna*, had been on a shindy with me about two years before when General Torres y Pesces had paid him three million and ninety dollars to escape to Curacao. The three million was in paper money of the Torres Government and the ninety dollars was in gold and silver. Duncan still had the three million dollars in his ship's box and we had had a laugh over it the night before.

" 'Lieutenant Connel, find Captain Duncan and say to him that General Hope wants to see him,' I shouted up the hatch.

"In a few minutes Duncan stuck his head over and I told him in Spanish what I wanted.

" 'Now, you Berkintowitz fellows,' said I, 'I am going to enlist you and give you your first month's pay. If you don't, I make you walk the plank. We can't feed you on a dangerous trip like this.'

" 'Please, mister, ve von't eat much.'

"Down came Duncan, marching with the ship's box in his arms, and an armed guard of four men.

"I administered the oath of allegiance and then commanded the sergeant to open the treasury and pay them. He opened the box and there lay the packets of green, yellow and red ten-thousand, five-thousand and one-thousand-dollar bills. The Berkintowitz who had been so silent and retiring till that moment came to life with a great joy on his freckled face. With great gravity I took two one-thousand-dollar bills and gave one to each.

" 'Your wages will be doubled for active service,' I said.

"Duncan nearly died from swallowing snickers mixed with tobacco-juice. The guard marched away and the brothers began to come out of their trance. They grabbed each other and did a regular Yiddisher dance.

" 'Hey, hey, cut that out, cut that out!' I yelled at them. They had gathered something of the conduct expected of them from the men of the guard, and the way they tried to be a company of two, front and salute, was rich.

"I got them berthed forward, got those noisy suits off of them and put the sergeant to drilling them as soon as we struck the Gulf Stream. Then every day Duncan and I used to lie back under the awning and watch Connel sitting in his hammock trying to teach them foot movements and the manual of arms. Laugh? By gypsum, it was the funniest performance I ever saw. They could not have kept step if they had had only one leg apiece. Their idea of a gun was something to parade with like a flag on a stick, though both was perfect on 'parade rest.'

"One day later on, as we lay becalmed off Greater Abaco, I thought I would have a little target practise. The bo'sun rowed out in the dinghy about two hundred yards and set up a board and box target. My experience has been that nearly every other tramp or roustabout on the docks or the streets of any American city is a drilled man. I'll go up against anything south of Key West with any kind of a bunch I can pull together north of it. Our men all made a fair showing, using the Winchesters out of Duncan's cabin as I did not want to open the cases below. I thought I would try Joey and Abie. Say, do you know I pretty nearly had to break every rib they had even to get them to take hold of a gun with a load in it? Finally, with Duncan standing by with a belaying-pin behind him and with me holding a bayonet at his stomach, we got Joey to try a shot. He leaned against the rail, pretended to squint along the barrel and, just about the time he had both eyes shut and the butt carelessly scrouged up in his neck, he pulled trigger. I got the gun as it was going overboard and Joey flew end over end and lit on the main hatch. Slowly he got up, with one eye banged shut and his nose bleeding, rummaging around in the front of his undershirt with his fingers. He pulled out the thousand-dollar bill of Torres money and held it out to me.

" 'Take it, mister, take it. Der percentage is too strong for me.'

"Well, sir, nothing would make them take hold of a gun again, until Connel happened to think of telling them that the kick was caused by the rifling in the barrel and that a smooth-bore would be just the thing. He hauled out a couple of the several old Mannleichers we had and showed them what he meant. That satisfied them. That was what I equipped them with. That is how the Smooth-bore Brothers got their name.

"I nearly forgot to tell you about the

sunburn. The third day out it got hot, and when I got peeled down to undershirt and thin cotton high-collared blouse I was myself again. So were all the others of the bunch except Abie and Joey. They did have sense enough to keep their hats on, but the first morning they took their coats and collars off and by night their necks were raw with sunburn. The next day they turned their shirt collars in for a kind of low necked effect so that the shirts would not rub the burns. Before night their chests and shoulders were sights to see, and then Abie fixed up an invention that nearly split that crew in two when he came on deck. He found an old parasol, tied it to a long stick, fastened that along his back-bone and came on deck with no shirt on at all.

"We got through the Windward Passage at night and five days later sighted Point Mike. We stood along the coast to the east and about daybreak a fishing-boat came alongside with Mena-Mena's nephew, a little yellow hunchback with a major-general's commission signed by his uncle. He told us we were to land far up in Cristobal Lagoon, and if he knew the selection for presidential candidate he did not tell me. Following the fishing-boat we made the inlet at dawn and before sun-up were anchored in fresh water between two strips of islands thick with trees. Fresh though the water was, it backed up or went out with the tide and by noon the *Fortuna* was as nicely squatted in the mud as anything you ever saw—just like an old duck of war hatching out a hell-brood in the hot sun.

"We had to keep quiet, for we did not know who might come cruising around in there before night when we could get farther inland and hit hard ground. Just as the sun was coming up I walked forward to see how she rode, and there stood the Smooth-bore Hermanos holding hands and watching the steaming water and the stinking jungle within half a stone's throw.

" 'Oh, Abie, look by the parrot fowl,' cried Joey.

" 'Oh, yes, see the monkeys; vat a gladness they make it," answered Abie gleefully.

" 'Abie, it is a country like Central Park, only worse,' commented Joey.

"The monkeys, looking for shell-fish left by the outgoing tide, were frisking about the drooping limbs just over several rough logs in the mud and reeds. Suddenly three of them dropped in a bunch and instantly there were wild screams of terror from the whole monkey crew. The logs had waked up into so many able-bodied and active alligators. One big mouth got two of the monkeys and the third monkey was shared, literally torn in half by the other two big 'gators. Loud as the monkeys screeched, the brothers went them one better. They tried to run, to look, to hide and to talk and yell murder all at once and ended up clasped in each other's arms, dancing up and down on the deck, sobbing like two frightened children. The mate grabbed them and shoved them below to stop their noise. About two hours later the St. Kitts nigger steward brought me a letter:

"Jennerill Hoap
Complamennty Preezentatings
Dear ser—This indenture witniset that me & A. Berkintowitz cancils the contract a4said and returns payment made. You diden told us you half *them* here R we wooden half come
J. Berkintowitz
We doan know the dade, thanking you in advance.

"When I got through laughing I wrote them a nice little note refusing to cancel the contract, returned the two thouand-dollar bills and put in two for ten thousand each as a bonus.

"We were floating at eight that evening and by dawn the next morning we were made fast along a jut of rock some miles inland and began to get the 'angles' ashore. The brothers worked like good fellows till one of them, venturing twenty feet from the gang, got in front of a red, black and yellow land-crab and it scuttled for cover, going over one of his feet. He let out one yell and a string of Yiddish prayers and dived for the ship, his brother after him. It cost me another twenty thousand of Torres paper money to get them back on the job.

"When the work was all done the rest of my command showed up—one hundred and sixteen whites and blacks commanded by three generals and divided into infantry, cavalry and artillery, the same being the ten thousand men Mena-Mena had promised me. The nearest town was Ayoilo, ten miles away, and we decided to attack it the next day. I looked over the bunch, dismounted all the cavalry and all but one of the generals, and cradled the extra stands on their horses' backs. Before I said good-by to Duncan I said to him:

"'Say, Captain, we have been pretty good friends and I want to offer you a little token of my esteem. Here's a set of poker-chips a friend of mine in New York gave me, and could you let me have about a million of that keepsake Torres money? I may want to choke these two Yiddishers before I get through.'

"Duncan was tickled to death with the exchange and I sure would never have let go of that poker-set if I could have packed it. I was a little afraid of some of the boys joshing the brothers and putting them wise, so I took them out and said to them:

"'Now, boys, to-day you begin to fight.'

"'Vy don't you try to make it a peace first?' suggested Abie.

"'No, we begin the war. Now, here are your two guns. See, I've put loads in them. Don't shoot at anything or anybody until your commanding officer tells you to and then shoot to kill.'

"'Oh, Abie, he speaks to us to make a murder! Oh, I can't do it, I can't make it,' said Joey, beginning to weep.

"'Now looky here," said I, getting hot under the collar, 'I am getting tired of you two. *I'll* do the murder if you don't brace up! We are going to attack a city to-day, and if we capture it and you do your share of the fighting, I will give you fifty thousand dollars each.'

"For a minute they were paralyzed. Then Abie began to grin at Joey and Joey at Abie, and they picked up their old smooth-bores and marched back to camp in single file, Abie remarking:

"'Ve got to be brave to-day, Joey, and make it a heroicness if ve never do it again.'

"ABOUT noon we topped a little hill and there lay the little white-walled, red-tile-roofed village of Ayoilo. I had picked up forty men and four horses from four plantations and had learned that there were two companies of government troops on station there. I deployed my men when in range and was just about to send a messenger into town to demand surrender when the rifles began to pop around an old canning factory on the side of town nearest to us and a few bullets whistled through the green overhead. The Smooth-bore Brothers immediately fell down and began to try to dig dog holes in the ground, so I leaned over and let them have a few nips of my quirt. The yells they let out were soul-splitting. Our boys were opening up in fine style and I was about to leave the two little scamps to shift for themselves when suddenly it occurred to me to remark that if either one of them got killed I would give the other one hundred thousand dollars life insurance. Joey was up on his feet at once, kicking Abie in the ribs and yelling: 'Come on Abie, come on! Ve got the percentage on our side. Come on, you little coward. Look at the nerve on *me!*'

"I looked back a few minutes later and they were coming ahead, but, though a mile from the enemy, they were charging bayonets, jabbing, sticking and reviling imaginary dying federals.

"There was no reserve to the canning factory, and as soon as we got the range and the steel-jacketed pills began to ricochet from the stone walls, a white flag went up in a jiffy and we rode into town at high noon. I was sitting in the doorway of the best *fonda* waiting for the reports on captured munitions and other things when I saw coming across the little plaza a pathetic sight—two thorn-torn, besmoked members of my army—Abie and Joey. They marched up proudly and I noticed that Abie had one leg bandaged above the knee, with real blood showing through, and that there was blood on his bayonet and on Joey's hands.

"They came to attention and saluted finely and I looked on them with a more than pleased smile.

"'Well, what can I do for you, boys? You seem to have been in the fight all right.'

"'Oh, don't say it, gentleman,' responded Abie with a proud glance that belied his modest words.

"'Ve thought maybe you had forgot to make something on us?'

"'Well, I guess I did forget,' I said with a laugh as I reached for my roll of Torres official treasury stationery. 'Here you are—fifty thousand each.'

"They were just about to march away to some place where they could express their joy when I called them back: 'Say, Abie, better have the doctor fix that up for you over in the hospital. Maybe there is a bullet in there.'

"'Oh, no, no. It was not by bullets. Joey sticked me in accidents.'

"It is no use for me to try to tell you the fun I had out of those two little chaps in the next month. After they had got a line on the percentage of mortality they didn't mind a fight. We took twelve towns without the loss of a man and they began to like war. They picked up Spanish faster than I ever saw men pick up a language, and as the army got bigger and our requisitioned supplies increased I put them to looking after the accounting and administration of the commissary. I have often wished since that I had just one commissary clerk as good as either of them.

"I kept them well supplied with silver so that they would not have to flash any of those 'phony' notes. I only had about a hundred thousand left when we captured our second provincial capital and I was thinking about taking them into my confidence and trying to get them to exchange nine hundred thousand or so they held for a couple of twenty-dollar gold pieces when suddenly, one night after we had captured Boca del Tocas, they went into a gambling-house and got pitched out of a second-story window for trying to cash one of the notes in a game. It seemed funny that neither one came around to see me and I concluded that they had put the blame on some peculiar peevishness of the game-keeper which they, being strangers in a strange land, did not understand. I ought to have known better, I suppose. Anyhow, I was getting a little bit too busy to bother much about them, with five thousand men to handle and old Ladriz trembling in Carrido in his palace as we drew steadily nearer.

"At Boca del Tocas we heard the news that instead of General Ramirez, our candidate, being on the way from the west with another body of men, Ladriz had arrested him the second day after we had landed and when he had him in jail had fixed up a compromise with him. Ladriz was to keep the presidency for two years, Carvalho, the vice-president, was to be kicked out and exiled and Ramirez was to be made vice-president with the ways greased to have him succeed to the presidential chair. They had forgotten Mena-Mena and me and our republic-builders. To date we were doing so nicely that I told Mena-Mena we might just as well go on and clean out the lot and make Mena-Mena president himself.

"The only thing we needed was a force to capture Puerto del Nogales, the one good port, just as near to us now as the capital. If we had control of the custom-house and could also land arms there to equip our recruits, it would be all over but the shouting. Half the republic was ours; every day he held the army in the capital Ladriz weakened his hold on the people. He must attack us, and we could afford to wait.

"It was the end of March before they tried it. They had even taken poor old General Torres out of his chair in his peaceful *patio* and put the good old warrior on a horse to command the army moving on us from the north. Ramirez, the dog, took command of the other wing.

"A thousand men could hold my entrenched camp on the hill in the south side of town and I decided to take the others and go to meet Torres. I expected not only to turn him back but to take over most of his men. Then I could go after Ramirez,—chase him straight into the capital and maybe capture him before he could get there. Then it would be all over.

"The night we moved out of town I was riding up to the head of the column when I saw two men in each other's arms. It was the brothers. One had been ordered with us without my knowledge, and they were saying farewell. The next day I saw it was Abie who was with me to uphold the honor of Rivington Street.

"Well, it's a good barrel that don't have one rotten apple. We got in touch with Torres the second evening. The cunning old fox had me flanked before daylight and opened up as the sun showed with Gatlings handled by Englishmen who had come on for some fun from Puerto del Nogales. By noon it was a rear-guard action and I had lost four hundred men.

"Early in the day I had swung my reserve around on a hill to meet his flanking and I got a sight of Abie. He was right in the front of the fight, pushing on to glory. It actually took my breath for a minute—I was never more astonished in all my life. And I couldn't help feeling a little bad, when we struck the Cristobal River and I got my men across safe and prepared to hold the ford during the night, to find that among the four hundred back there was A. Berkintowitz and that somewhere up in little old New York a bride who had been robbed of her husband on their wedding night was now a widow.

"When I rode into town all in good order it seemed to me that there was a terrible change in the place. It took me about two minutes to find out that Mena-Mena had decided to go out to meet Ladriz, fearing I would get too much glory out of whipping Torres. He had made half a day's march as if he were parading, riding at the head of the army with a band. Some of Ladriz' scouting cavalry had swooped down and carried off Mena-Mena, his staff *and* the band. The army had returned. Mena-Mena was not much missed, but it was soon plain that, in Boca del Tocas, I could run a revolution much better without a candidate than I could without a band.

"Connel and I sat down in the Café de Angeles that night and it took a quart for me before I could laugh. It *was* funny though. From a military point of view I had the best army, the best record, the best position, but *I* couldn't and *wouldn't* be president! Nor would I make overtures to an old traitor like Ramirez. No general with me was big enough. There was nothing to do but hold fast and whip all comers right where I was until something happened. The something happened quick enough.

"The next day it was reported that Torres was marching on Puerto del Nogales. In four days he had captured the port, taken possession of the custom-house, sent an envoy to the United States representing his provisional government, and was marching on the capital, leaving a famous European soldier whose name nobody seemed to get, in charge of the port and the custom-house. Torres was after the presidency.

"What a fix that left me in you can see without smoked glasses. I could not march on the capital and take it without a candidate, no matter how strong I was. I could not back up Torres without being asked and Connel and I used up all the whisky in Boca trying to figure out who was going to pay us and our men for our visit to the republic. None of us were that fond of travel and out-door life that we cared to sit around till a new president was installed and then be deported as dangerous to the public welfare. The native part of my army melted into thin air the first two nights after the news reached us.

"I was standing in front of the Café de Angeles one night, waiting for the hill to come around so I could climb it and go to bed, when I saw somebody I knew tramping down the street with a Mannleicher on his shoulder. It was Joey! I had clean forgot to tell him about Abie. Then I remembered it was queer that he had not been around to ask. I called him over.

" 'Say, Joey, you know your brother Abie?'

" 'Yes, gentleman.'

" 'Well, I forgot to tell you he got killed in that fight the other night.'

" 'And please that is too bad, ain't it?'

"You would have thought we were talking about my brother instead of his. You could have put all the sorrow he showed into a chorus-girl's sigh. I looked at him dumbfounded for a minute. Then he began to fiddle and shuffle around a little bit and finally he said: 'You don't make it to say anything about the insurance money, Gen'ral.'

" 'Oh, is *that* what you are thinking about! Well, here you are, Joey.' And I pulled out the last hundred thousand of those 'phony' bills and passed them over. He thanked me and saluted fairly well, then went on.

"I had cleared the wires behind me as I advanced and the next morning I got a shock over them. My operator called me and said the port wanted to talk to me at the wire. He explained that the cable was working from the port east to Esperanza and Esperanza was wiring west to me.

" 'When the deuce did that start?' I asked.

" 'Why somebody has been sending cipher messages to the port for several days. They were on your blanks. I thought it was you.'

" 'Great Hellcats, no! but let's see what this is.'

"And what do you think? Greetings from General Torres and an invitation to me to fight for the liberation of the republic from the tyrants that oppressed it and an offer of the post of third in command of his army! We talked back and forth for a while. He told me he was going to move on the capital in the morning—that his second in command was a very able soldier, statesman and financier and he was going to leave him in command of the port. I was to leave Connel in command at Boca del

Tocas, travel to the port, take over the customs money, pay the army, get up the artillery and put the three gunboats there in commission so as to hold the entire coast while he made a clean sweep inland. He wanted his second in command relieved as soon as possible, as that general's strategic and diplomatic services would be needed in the siege of the capital. Old Torres was still raving about this man when the wires went bad and the talk ended.

"Boys, I will never forget the morning I arrived in Puerto del Nogales. I had a guard of twenty men including Joey, who had begged to be taken along. From the hill above the town I could see twenty or thirty vessels in the harbor. They had been held out by the blockage but now had got in, discharged and were loading. The freight yards were piled with incoming merchandise. The custom-house was doing more business than a county fair.

"Outside the town I was met by a big mounted escort whose officer was all deference and who said he had orders to conduct me direct to the general in command as the garrison was drawn up in the plaza to receive me. I asked him the name of the general. He tried to tell me, but it evidently pained him.

"As we rode into the square the guns began to boom and the band to play and there in the center was the general with his staff and he was certainly the most brilliant bird of plumage I ever saw. He was about as big as a minute, but he sat on the back of a giant white draught-horse. His pants were blue and red. He wore a brass German helmet. His dress coat was solid gold. As I approached after the salute and we came face to face, may I never see a bottle again if *my superior officer wasn't little Abie Berkintowitz!*

"Now, boys, we all know too much about dignity south of the Rio Grande for any one to suppose that I let on, though I almost fell out of my saddle. Behind me some one was weeping with pure joy. That was Joey. I thought it was because Abie was not dead. I still had something to learn.

"It was two hours before I got him alone in a room of the *casa municipal* and then I turned on him. 'You little rascal,' said I, 'how the devil did you pull this off? What license have you got to be a general?'

"He almost got down on his knees to explain to me that he had not been captured at all—that he had started to run away when the fight began, only he had taken the wrong direction and run straight into Torres' army. He thought he might as well pretend to be somebody as nobody, since everybody around was pretending anyhow, so he pretended he was a great Russian general, and Torres believed him. Without thinking, he tried to send a telegram to Joey and when it went through and Torres found the wires were open, he made him a colonel in charge of communications. When he put them on a business footing, according to New York ideas, Torres was so pleased that he gave him the second place in the army, made him minister of finance in his provisional government and put him in charge of the custom-house.

" 'And please, you should ought to see vat a business I make it,' he concluded.

"I found he had been in communication with Joey all the time and the cipher had been roman letters for Yiddish words. It had been his idea to have me join with Torres. Why? So he could rejoin with Joey.

"Well, he made Joey a general before sunset and the next day the news came that Torres had had a bloodless victory and was president. He wanted his prize strategist and statesman to come at once. General Berkintowitz arranged to have the custom accounts turned over to me in two days.

"By a strange coincidence the mail steamer was sailing at that hour for France and Joey was to go back to New York via Europe. He said a pathetic good-by to both me and Abie and his last act was to hand me his old smooth-bore as a keepsake. After we had gone a little way up the dock Abie cried out that he must run back and kiss Joey once again. He would join me in the *casa municipal* in a few minutes.

"I strolled on up the street and into the square. I saw two porters lugging a box into the *casa municipal* and when I entered the commandant's office there sat the box on the table. I sat down to wait. The cathedral bells struck noon. An hour passed. No sign of the minister of finance, the second in command of the army, the receiver of customs at Puerto del Nogales. The French steamer was now hull-down on the horizon. A sudden terrible thought grabbed me. I ran to that box and threw it open. First was a packet—the customs sheets! I looked at the control sheet.

Credit of over eleven hundred thousand dollars gold!

"Underneath was a letter from Major-General A. Berkintowitz. First he resigned. Then he explained that when he found the Torres money was no good he and Joey could not sleep of nights till they laid a plan to make it good. He deserted to Torres to give the old man the idea to be president and how to do it. Joey had staid only to get the last hundred thousand, the promised insurance. The only reason he had induced Torres to have me come to take charge of the customs was that I, having paid over the phony money, would surely be the last to charge him with dishonesty if he changed the Torres paper money for Torres gold customs receipts.

"Gentlemen, under that letter was the pile of notes I had bought from Duncan for a poker-set, and the balance was figured to a penny at the prevailing rate of exchange. The rest had gone to France in Joey's boxes. Of course I had to take one of the gunboats and get myself over to Curaçao before Torres called for the money to pay the army. I thought I'd heard the last of those fellows until this old smooth-bore went off to-night. There hangs the other one."

Jimmie took down the old piece, broke it and out flew a nicked ball-cartridge.

"And neither one ever fired a shot!"

A SAMARITAN OF THE RIVERINE

By Randolph Bedford

IN THE wild, burning sheep-walk of Central-Eastern Australia, watered by the mighty Darling and sundry smaller and deceitful streams; where the Winter is a flood; where the Summer is a furnace, and the sun and the baked dust and the parched gums are of a uniform dull red; and where the early Spring is as delicate as its sister seasons are fierce, the Samaritan of the Riverine lived in the body. And there he lives in the memory even unto this day.

But the people of the rivers did not generally know him as the Samaritan, nor do they. His real name was Stephen Been. The wags styled him "The Has Been."

He was over seventy years of age, erect as a gum-bole, strong almost as a man thirty years his junior, and, withal, gentle as a child, for his feet were very near the grave; and already there were whisperingly chanted in his ears the forewords of the wonderful song that all men shall one day, dying, hear, and that the new-born have not yet forgotten.

The world had dealt with him more cruelly than it does with its beasts, for he was merely a man, and a dull one, which is an animal of no fixed commercial value. This simple soul had been intended to pass through the furnace of the world unsullied. Here was a child's heart in a man's body, and everything had seemed to combine to degrade the mind of the man to the level of the beast.

When Stephen Been was arrested in a suburb of London, long ago when the last century was young, he might have been described on the charge-list thus: "A clod, eighteen years old." At any rate the law recognized that he was a clod, and immediately set about breaking him in twain as a preliminary to fertilizing the barren soil of his mind.

The poor, shivering, frightened animal had stolen half a sheep, value five shillings, and the law sentenced him to seven years' penal servitude to square the accounts. "Debit, one-half sheep, five shillings. Received payment, with thanks, seven years' transportation."

If the law had made out the account in a businesslike manner, that is the way it would have read.

So the Clod, with a number of other clods, and a fair sprinkling of genuine criminals, was embarked for Botany Bay to serve his sentence.

Botany Bay was not the Clod's destination, by the way. Port Jackson was the particular hell he was bound for, but the knowledge of Australian geography held by English state officials at that time was limited.

If that voyage did not make of the Clod a fiend, it was not his fault. The genuine criminals just referred to were bad enough; the marines and the crew were worse. An earlier voyage of this very ship had lasted nearly two years, for the transport had taken out a cargo of female convicts on that occasion. And now it had been entrusted with the conveyance of mostly first offenders, whose chief crimes had been poverty and hunger, and whom the state alleged it intended to reform. And the state's methods of reformation were the lash, the chain, the tube-gag, the collar, the scaffold; in a word, its instrument was the executioner, its example was blood.

That orgie was forty years old and strengthened by its experiences when Stephen Been landed at Sydney Cove. Being stupid, he was very quiet, and his jailers, mistaking his stupidity for stubbornness, brought him up for punishment on the paltriest of excuses.

"They would flog the mule out of him," said they, and instead they flogged a devil in. So he became an animal, and as he passed from the lower vegetable state he had been born in, to the higher life of the carnivora, he was made what the system called "a dangerous felon." He attempted to escape. Seven years were added to his first sentence—his floggings were more frequent; then Hobart Town and Maria Island, the aggravated hells of convictdom followed. Just before his additional sentence had expired, a member of the Clod's gang—a hybrid creature, half convict, half convict's jailer, proposed that the gang should escape in a body. The gang acted on his suggestion and attempted to break jail. Mr. Hybrid sold them to the commandant of the station, and all of them were captured.

More floggings, more jail, for the animal-clod. The law limited the term of imprisonment then passed on him, but it did not specify the number of lashes he was to receive. The commandant could attend to that trivial question, and to do him the justice due to a zealous Government official, the commandant did.

The informer was at that time about twenty-four years of age. He had yet to serve five years of his sentence for forgery, but the Crown granted him a free pardon as the reward of his treachery, and he left Tasmania for the mainland.

Stephen Been returned to his cell in Hobart Jail and received the first of his new series of floggings. He did not feel the strokes; he was repeating to himself—as if he could forget it—the oath he had sworn to kill the informer. He did not flinch from the flogger, for he thought of his revenge, and revenge is the kindest liniment for wrong. So at last the most meritorious convict system had made the inoffensive Clod first an animal, now a devil. In '52 he was discharged from Hobart Jail after serving twenty-four years in a hell that could have been made only by man. Twenty-four years of a life that might have been made a source of good to the living, thrown away in expiation of an alleged crime that had long been dead!

THE name of the hybrid Informer was Abel Shaw. He went to Australia, as stated, and when gold was discovered at Bendigo he went to the field, and was allowed to mine, for he held a free pardon. His claim was one of the lucky holes—the informer's fortune was assured from the hour.

In '54 Stephen Been also reached Bendigo and stepped into a new world. His intention was to raise himself into a respectability he had never known in the days of his innocence, and to do this only money was necessary; for the one-time Clod saw now that respectability is merely accumulated money in its most portable form. He had never borne the appearance of a typical criminal, and as the police inspection was lax, owing to the smallness of the force, he was allowed to secure a claim unquestioned.

In three days he had bottomed. With what trembling eagerness he washed his first pan of dirt! The result of his labor with the pick and the shovel and the cradle and the dish meant more than gold to him. Good—they meant peace; bad—they were the prophets of a return to the old life. But the results were good. The Clod-animal poured the water from the dish very carefully, and saw seven water-worn pebbles, which he took up on the point of his clasp-knife, and felt anxiously with his tongue. Then he began to tremble and to flush hot and cold, and at last the tears came.

He had found gold. More, he had found hope. For over a fortnight he won at the rate of upwards of three ounces a day. Fortune, as if to atone for his twenty-four years in perdition, courted him and gave him gold. The ring of the pick was gold. The sweat of his brow, which had been agony at Maria Island, was wealth at old Bendigo.

And then the determination to kill the informer came back to him and blotted out all his visions of happiness. He had been planning what he would do with the money. Of course he would go back to his own little village in Devonshire, provided, of course, that he could escape the vigilance of the police. And when he reached England he would play the banker to his family and all of his old friends.

His people should never toil again. Happiness should be theirs for the rest of their days, and all the old daddies who had mumbled their kind-hearted commonplaces over him as a boy—worn old figures whose joints had been curved and gnarled by the bitterness of their unproductive labor, clods who had wrought to make the master rich—the master whose clay they were—should have their pipes alight and their glasses filled for ever and ever.

So the poor heart that wanted to buy love at any price, or to steal it if need be, builded his castles and day-dreamed between the pick-strokes. All the people he intended to benefit were long since dead and freed at last from the dread of starvation which had accompanied them as a shadow through all their cheerless, songless lives. But Stephen did not consider that death might have spoiled his plans. He had suffered so much and yet had lived, and he thought it must be terribly difficult to die. And so he planned lovingly for the few people who had given him a kind word or look in the days of his cloddishness—planned to requite them as their misery deserved—not with the measure of man, but with the measure of love, brimful and running over.

But a product of the old, half-forgotten hell, Shaw, the Informer, to wit, stepped in and blasted all these unselfish intentions.

Stephen Been met his enemy in a busy street, or rather track, of the camp some months after he began to win a fortune. The Samaritan-to-be forgot all his dreams of benevolence to the dwellers in the little English village he had left so long ago. Within the space of a thought he sprang at the informer, closed with him, and bore him to the ground, and there deliberately began to strangle him. A trooper, probably for the first time in the history of the world, was at hand, and he promptly struck Stephen Been with the blunt edge of his sword, and towed him to the large hut, with many intermissions in the slabs thereof, which served as a jail. Final result—the Informer was regarded as a martyr who had done his duty to society and had been undeservedly punished therefor; and Been was once again sentenced—to two years' imprisonment.

A few months after his sentence had expired he fell in with his enemy again, this time at Wood's Point. A little more gold-winning, another assault, another sentence, this time for five years. And when that sentence had expired he found himself with only a few pounds as capital—his gold had been deposited with a man who was shortly after detected robbing a sluice-box, and all the metal in the possession of the thief was handed to the robbed company as being their property.

Said Stephen Been, as he left Beechworth Jail in '62 and shook his impotent hand at its heavy blue-stone walls: "I'll kill the dog next time—I'll kill *you* if I live long enough!"

II

BUT he did not stay long in the country of gold. The metal meant men, and the presence of men meant police and the law. Even to find his enemy and wreak a just vengeance on him was not inducement to brave these terrors; he saw that only in comparative solitude could he find peace. Wherefore he shouldered his swag and stepped bravely north—an indescribably pathetic old man of fifty-five.

The System had done one good turn for him. Truly the torture of its rigorous discipline had brought the sorrow that whitens the hair and furrows the face. It had made his heart old before his heart had known youth, but it had also developed in him wonderful physical endurance—it had deadened his body to pain, made it indifferent to hunger; converted him into a perpetually adaptable creature to all, however rapidly changing, conditions of existence.

And as he trudged along the rough track his heart began to beat with youth as it had never beaten before. He had never felt love, except that dull half-awakening to human sympathy in old Bendigo in '54, and now the million scents and voices of the eternally beautiful bush told him that such pure attractions as it could offer were the especial property of such as he.

"Ting-a-ling," said the bell-bird, and the swag was heavy no more. "Tweet-Tweet," said the minah, and the jail and the Informer were forgotten.

North, farther north, through the giant granite ranges, through the valleys of the Murray, and into the plains of the West he traveled, flying from man always, going deeper into the heart of the great wild whose message of peace had been breathed to him three hundred miles nearer the sea.

At the stations in his track he never asked for the usual ration of flour and mutton; he demanded it and paid for it, and then tramped to his lonely camp, a mile removed from even the horse-paddock. This sullen reserve lasted long after the Murrumbidgee had become a daily sight to him, and the speed of the current heralding its junction with the mighty Murray showed longer and stronger in the eddies at the bends. There, venturing near to a homestead unusually early in the day, a horseman rode up to him and inquired if he wanted work.

"Yes, sir," said Stephen Been, humbly pulling at his hat, as if he were still a number and not a man.

"I want a man to load wool and to take charge of a barge to Echuca."

Of course Stephen Been accepted, and a new era began for him. He fulfilled his contract satisfactorily and made many trips on the river, which he began to love as he loved children and all things that were young and were not men. He could not read, and yet he was the best freight clerk the rivers ever had.

"Two tons of wire for Burrabogie," said the carrier at Echuca, "and a case of whisky for Mungadal," and so on; and Stephen Been could have told you all his freight before he was out of port a day. He used to run over the names of the stations on the river just for the pleasure of feeling his importance as a freight clerk. You might find him a dozen times a day chanting the euphony of the station nomenclature thus: "Groongal, Pevensey, Mungadal, Eli Elwah, Burrabogie, Illillawa, Albemarle, Terrywalka, Ulonga," to infinity.

And then it was a new life. His importance as steersman of the barge, the quiet, green, leaf-tinted water, the sobbing of the engine of the towing steamer as it breasted the current—all had the charm of novelty; and the appreciation of newness which is surely God's best gift to the adventurous man with a soul.

By-and-by he became a property-holder. The "boss" liked the strong old man who could work without a word; who never used the usual language of the river and the shearing-shed—(the boss could curse fluently, by the way, and the "super" was exceedingly profane and blastiferous), and who could be trusted alone with a barge-load in a "strange" port, because he never drank. So one day, being present at the sale of a river navigating company's fleet, the boss, having previously sounded his bargeman on the subject, purchased the *Tilpa*, a side-wheel steamer, ordinarily used for trading purposes, and her attendant giant, the *Bunyip* barge. Then he arranged instalment terms with the ex-convict, and Been entered on his new line of ship owning.

On the strength of being a shipowner, he secured long credit with several firms for the supply of miscellaneous stores, and started from Echuca one Summer night with steamer and barge laden almost hulldown with everything that the inhabitants of the West might require—sheep shears and moleskins, fencing-wire and onions, boots, saddles and tobacco—a floating store.

It was a happy life from the beginning. He managed to pay for the barge; he opened a bank-account; he was respected; men called him "Captain Been"; he had never to leave the beloved rivers. Most of his dealings with the stations lying on the three thousand miles of water were on the credit system, and here his absolute dearth of education told much against him. However, his faultless memory and a unique method of bookkeeping invented by himself and consisting chiefly of sundry knife-cuts on the starboard paddle-box enabled him to collect at least seventy-five per cent. of his money. That and one hundred per cent. profit considered left him very much on the right side of the ledger. He would sell his stock at the head of the Darling, and then load with wool for Echuca, to return with stores on the next fresh.

The life drew from him all sourness. He became the Samaritan of the Rivers. The *Tilpa*, up or down trip, continually carried men who wanted to work their passage and who evidently translated that phrase as meaning the consumption of as much tucker as the cook could prepare. And be the end of their stage at Brewarrina or Bourke or Tilpa or Louth or Wilcannia or Menindie, they left with half a pint of whisky in their stomachs and a shilling or two in their pockets and some tobacco and rations in their swags. Did not Bathurst, the educated loafer of the rivers, get three pounds of Captain Been by telling a story of an asthmatic mother, and did he not a year afterwards tell me that Been was the Samaritan of the Riverine, and wherefore is not this history written?

The loafers who sponged on him loved this simple old man who knew of nothing but the rivers and would talk of them for hours.

"You know that bend near 'Crismus Island'?" he would say, "There's two of the cunningest water-hens you ever see—I believe they know the *Tilpa* now. Why they've been there this five years, an' whenever we passes there they flies around to the stern's much as to say, 'Let's see if it's the dear old *Tilpa*, or that puffing Billy, the *Saddler*, what's always firin' rifles at us. I believe they can read the name of my boat, too."

And then he would repeat that only boast of his to the effect that he could take the *Tilpa*, what was drawing four-feet-seven, over a four-foot-six bar; and he could steer her from Dunlop to Albemarle blindfold—yes! he could! Oh, ye might stare, and yer might say no, but he could. If it comes to that, he'd give you a passage an' prove he could do it blindfold—there!

His friends loved him, and he knew no enemy. There was in his nature a stubborn good, which even the great penal system had been unable to destroy. From Fort Bourke to the Campaspe he was known and he was honored, and yet most men knew his history.

His moments of sadness were few. He felt fiercely revengeful when he thought of the Informer, but the memory of his wrong was beginning to fade in his prosperity. Only when he saw children playing he realized what he had lost and their voices were as the touch of a hand on his old loveless heart. If he could have stolen one of those curly-haired babies at Culpaulin or Dunlop I believe he would have done it. But '78 brought him the love he craved for.

NEAR Easter Island the *Tilpa* stopped in the early moonlight to "wood-up," and the gentlemen of the river who worked their passages wrestled languidly with the ax on the rottenest and therefore the most easily cut and the worst fuel they could find.

In the center of a space embayed in the

shore by the island, a solitary traveler's fire gleamed fitfully. The traveler was extremely disgusted with his situation; he had been intended by nature to be the most gregarious of men, and circumstances had made him an Ishmael on the track. This was his second night away from home, and the prospect of the road, which had seemed to him free and independent and glamoured with the romance of the bush, was now very, very dreary.

Therefore when he saw the *Tilpa* moored to the bank and all hands, from captain to cook, cutting wood for the engine, he walked over to the workers, wishing to lend a hand and too proud to risk a snub. So he stood by while they worked, and would very probably not have spoken to them but for the fact that he saw a tall, spare, magnificent old man bowing under the weight of a dead branch.

"I'll take that, daddy," he said.

"Daddy?"

Stephen Been staggered with amazement, and the weight fell on the traveler's shoulders.

WHEN the work was finished the Captain almost forced the young man to accompany him to the little saloon, where they drank a tot of whisky each. He questioned the young fellow in a kindly, inquisitive manner, which proved his interest and, little by little, he found that the traveler's name was George Garth, that he had quarreled with his father, whom he said he did not like, and there was an end to the matter. He had set out from Louth two days before to walk until he met something to do.

And then the Captain insisted on Garth's remaining aboard, and he sent one of the gentlemen who were "working their passage" for the swag by the new chum's fire. Then he installed his friend in the best berth on the wheel-deck, and saw Garth, worn out with his unusual tramp, fall asleep as the *Tilpa* steamed down the moonlit river.

That word "Daddy" from such a man had given Stephen Been the son of his loveless dreams and won the Samaritan forever.

Next day Garth asked to be given something to do, and the old man, who had very hazy ideas on the subjest, suggested that he ought to take stock. And Garth did so, and placed the *Tilpa's* financial condition in such a light that the Samaritan thought his knife-notch style of bookkeeping might not be absolutely perfect after all.

He broached the subject to the mate in the wheelhouse that evening. "Seems to me, Jim," said he, "that the young man might's well stay on an' look after the bills —be a what's it?"

"Supercargo," said the mate shortly.

"Yes, that's it," assented Stephen Been. "Won't do makin' any more 'oles in the paddle-box."

"That's a fact. If you chop it much more there'll be no starb'd sponson at all. Bimeby you'll have a ship made of holes."

AND so George Garth became supercargo, and the trade with the young women at the stations increased amazingly, and the old man found the young one more valuable than he had dreamed, and loved him more dearly with the birth of each successive day.

The affection was mutual. The old man was lovable, and then they had so much in common; both loved the river—that was everything. And Been showed the supercargo the wonderful water-hens in the bend near Christmas Island, and told numberless stories of driving the steamer full speed ahead when the river was dangerously low because the banks were streets of fire, and of shooting the punt rope at Wilcannia when the stream was in flood—he sang, in his rough vocabulary, the epic of the river men. And when they passed a tortoise paddling and spluttering in an insanity of fear of the smoking bulk of the steamer, Been would remark that the terrapin was very like an old jew lizard he had known at Fort Bourke in '74 and "that there jew lizard—he was a terror for santypedes an' such like, an' he once et half a pound o' shin o' beef at a sittin', he did."

For his part, Garth was in paradise. The preliminary work of setting affairs in order being ended, he had nothing to do while the boat was between stopping places, and so he roamed over the steamer at his will, now in the wheelhouse, now on a sponson, then in the bows. With the first streak of the day the steamer's whistle ran along the river reaches, and as she steamed away the nude figure of the supercargo appeared on a paddle-box—he dropped a bucket into the foaming wheel-wash, drew it up, and drenched himself with the contents. And after that, by the time he was dressed, the steamer woke the life of the river before the sun had touched it, and the mallards started for the day's flight, for they were unreasoning creatures and flew on a straight line ahead of the steamer, too foolish to think of getting out of the way. And the ghostly cockatoos fled daily before the *Tilpa* westward, when the Summer was waning, for they intended to Winter in the Murray.

At eight o'clock the bell sounded breakfast, and Garth joined the Captain and his mate in the saloon, which was about the size of a fairly large packing-case, and after that, smoke-ho, and a revel in the careless knowledge that the next homestead would not be sighted till the afternoon. It is a fine life, this innocent existence of the rivers; it is a paradise for whoever has a soul, and souls were owned by Been, the Captain, and his supercargo, Garth.

BUT discord came to the paradise. One day in June of '79, when the river was lowest and the *Tilpa* and her laden barge passed Dunlop on the last upward trip for the season, the super of the station hailed the steamer and came aboard. He wanted only a few trifling things, he said, but he delayed the *Tilpa* half an hour, and in his desultory conversation with the Captain told him that Coruna, the next station eastward, had changed hands. The new owner, he remarked, was Mr. Garth, a J. P., and no end of a swell.

The Captain retailed the news to the supercargo later on, and was amazed at the confusion of the young man.

"You ought to know all about it, I suppose, dad," said Garth at last. "This Mr. Garth is my father, and we've never agreed —that's why I left him, that's why I don't want to see him again till I'm independent."

These remarks, of course, resulted only in making Been all the more curious, and by judicious pumping he learned all the facts. Garth Senior was very unscrupulous. He had done shady things in stock deals and mining transactions. Garth Junior objected, and the old man had told him to clear out with his honesty and not come back again unless his honesty brought him enough to live on.

And therefore Garth Junior had cleared.

"You're a white man," commented Been, when the young fellow had concluded. "We'll let him see that honesty does pay—I 'aven't much longer to live, and the craft's yours when I go. No, no talk now—I've said it, and I wouldn't go back on my word for no man."

They stopped at Coruna to canvass the new owner before some other trading river-tramp secured the business. Captain Been, now quite an experienced diplomat in his way, sent a message by the mate requesting Mr. Garth, J. P., to honor the steamer with his presence, and five minutes after a white-haired old gentleman stepped on the *Tilpa's* deck. He was Mr. Garth. He started violently as the supercargo came forward saying, "How are you, father?"

He did not start when the supercargo introduced him to Captain Been; he merely said, "Glad to meet you, Captain. I hope we shall be able to do business together."

But Stephen Been, as he took his customer's proffered hand, felt sick with long-thwarted revenge, for Mr. John Garth, J. P., and the Informer of the old Maria Island were one man.

III

THE shock to the Samaritan had been very great. There, in the new life of fairness and clean hands and free goings out and untrammeled comings in, the corpse of the convict-time had come to resurrection. For several hours following the departure of the Informer, who had left the *Tilpa* without any idea of her Captain's identity, he sat in the little cabin next the wheelhouse with his arms folded and his head fallen on his breast. The supercargo looked in once or twice to ask where the steamer was to tie up, and was told to "steam easy till I tell you." The dusk crept over the river, and the great sponson and bow lamps were lighted, and the cook rang the bell for supper, but the Captain still sat in the cabin on the wheel-deck and told his friendly querists that he was 'all right—never better—leave him alone.'

He sat there and thought until he was almost mad. At nine o'clock the mate went to him and insisted on being heard. 'The night was very dark, the river was dangerously low, the stream was sown with snags; hadn't they better tie up?'

Stephen Been aroused himself by great effort; rose and went into the wheelhouse. There he went over the rough chart—which was rolled up in a great box and was almost as long as the river itself—and told them to tie up in the next bend. His voice, hollow as the voice of the dying, made mate and supercargo look at him surprisedly. They saw that the face was not the face of the Samaritan. Always clean-shaven, it had resumed the expression of the hunted convict at bay; its lines had hardened, the lips seemed to have become thin and sneering and cruel; the eyes were shot with yellow gleams of revengeful madness; the mouth was half open in a horribly hungry fashion; the eye-teeth, standing conspicuously in the bare and livid gums, were like the fangs of the wild dog.

"You are ill, dad," said the supercargo pityingly.

"No, I'm not," answered Been. "I lifted a big weight to-day, an' I've strained my back."

The mate suggested a sweating bath in a wet sheet, but Stephen Been refused all the remedies of the river, and, without waiting to see the beloved *Tilpa* snug for the night, turned in.

In the darkness there came to him strange old shapes he hoped he had forgotten—the ghosts of the gang who attempted the escape for which Abel Shaw had sold them to the commandant. There came the ghost of young Hitchins—the boy who had in the frenzy of recapture killed the constable who had attempted his arrest, the boy who had, in the awful desperation of his gallows-death, uttered blasphemies that made even the executioner shudder. There came the shape of Peter Wells who died on the triangles during his punishment as ringleader of the escape; there came to him others—sad shapes saying hesitatingly that the time for justice had arrived; noisy, blasphemous shapes, calling on him in the name of his manhood and of his oath to avenge their stripes and the greatness of their old-time misery. Some were cold and half apathetic, some despairing, some hot with the white heat of long-nursed wrong. But all of them commanded him to do the one deed—to slay their common enemy.

And as if they had been so many men and he were indeed their captain, too, he had told them that justice should be done, and had waved them aside as if they interfered with his thoughts. Then the shapes left him to decide on the manner of Garth's death.

All sorts of schemes, mostly impracticable, suggested themselves to him. He would decoy the informer into the dry wastes in the backblocks of the river, kill his horse, and leave him to die of thirst; he would invite him aboard the steamer and leap into the river with him; he would lock him in the cabin and shoot him. These and a hundred other plans worked in his brain.

He rose early the next morning, still undecided on the manner of Garth's death—still determined to exact full payment of the revenge owing him. However, for that week at least he could do nothing. He must mature his scheme.

The *Tilpa* resumed her journey up-stream with her Captain in the same undecided frame of mind. Three days after they had reached Brewarrina the river fell alarmingly, and the *Tilpa* was forced to remain tied up at the wharf until the next fresh. During this period of enforced idleness the Captain came to a conclusion as to the way the death sentence passed by the ghosts of the murdered on the Informer should be carried out. The accepted plan was grotesquely horrible—the jury of dead felons by their foreman, Stephen Been, had both found the verdict and imposed the expiation. Garth, the owner of Coruna, was sentenced to be dressed in the old Canary costume, then to be tied up and flogged to death. The labor of decoying and binding him was easy to the Samaritan's diplomacy, and the Samaritan's strength and revenge would make his arm tireless of the scourge until the end. A fine revenge, truly. The Samaritan felt almost happy as he thought over it.

THE fresh did not arrive until August, and then it was small, and carried them only a score of miles west of Louth. The mate and supercargo worried and fretted under the delay. They cursed the river, which was not much more than a chain of pools. They stamped the deck, because September was very close at hand. Ere this they should have been half way back from Echuca, ready to sell out the store to the shearers and to get the earliest bales of the clip, and beat the hated *Saddler* and the *Warrego* on the down-stream journey.

Stephen Been smiled calmly at the delay. There was plenty of time, he said; he did not care if the barge went down-stream empty—let the *Saddler* have the wool—what did he care? A few homestead lessees,

—men with a paltry ten thousand sheep or so—had cut out early, and the clip of these small men came to the *Tilpa* and filled the barge fairly well, and this fact served to cheer the supercargo and the mate. They would not be able to trade very much, because the store was almost empty, but they could get wool-loading in early, so that they would be ready to race to the market on the rise when it did come. But they felt uneasy for all that, simply because all the life of the stream seemed uneasy also.

The rats began to leave the river and scurry up the banks and on to the plains; every day saw an exodus of rabbits. And then there came that leaden hush of everything which precedes any unusual occurrence in nature. The river did not seem to ripple as it struck the floats of the *Tilpa's* wheels; and the ducks flew away from their natural home; the screaming cockatoos screamed no more and flew south instead of west as usual; the gum leaves murmured not; the air was heavy with suppressed fear—even the birds of the month, the parakeets, which were merely animated shrieks in a dress of emerald and crimson flying athwart the gold of the sun, were strangely mute; the whole earth seemed to hold its breath so that it might not sigh the apprehension which filled it.

And Stephen Been, noting these signs, stretched a wire cable from the towing-frame of the *Tilpa* to the great eucalypt growing in the billabong inside the southern bank, and the engine, rusted by its long rest, drove the steamer to an opening in the tree-fringe just abeam of the anchoring gum. They prepared, in short, with the impudent daring of man, for a standing fight with an inundation.

They saw no man belonging to the land; they were as much alone as if the river had been a trackless sea. No news of the flood had come to them; they blamed Bourke for not having sent warnings. But Bourke itself was wrestling despairingly with the water giant. The founders of the town have built it in the shorter parallel of a horseshoe bend, just where the river can do its greatest, most destructive work. While the people of the *Tilpa* grew sick with anxiety, Bourke was up to its arm-pits in water—Bourke was disheveled and drunken with the flood.

It came to the *Tilpa* in a wall of water and wreckage—a wall of water that broke and reformed and fell upon itself with the sound of thunder; a wall that tore patriarchal trees from their roots and hurled them along like matches; a wall that hissed like a great serpent, and gathered and crushed the face of the world in its constricting folds. It came with the battering-rams of trees, of wreckage covered with snakes and other creeping things huddled together like friends, their venom sapped by fear.

As the *Tilpa* and her barge rose with the flood the crew hauled on the cable and started the engines, and so by-and-by drew the steamer and her charge up to the tree, which the mate said would stand forty floods.

But at three o'clock the next morning, when the rain was falling in sheets, the mate recanted. The fastening of the cable disappeared; the water crept into the limbs of the tree and shook it till it groaned. And still they held on.

In mid-current the water was black with timber and living trees; rafts of débris carrying hopeless animals—opossums swooning with fear, bears wailing like little children lost in the streets of a great city.

At four o'clock they heard a steamer's whistle shrieking above the roar of the water, and a few minutes later a wool-laden barge shot past them. Then followed a steamer, her red lights tinging the water as with blood, her stack vomiting sparks. The men on the *Tilpa* could see that one wheel had been carried away by the battering of wreckage; very probably the rudder had gone also and she was attempting to steer out of the current with the remaining wheel. It was the *Warrego;* she had ridden from Louth on the face of the flood.

The *Warrego* disappeared. Then came more wreckage; the flood drew back for an effort, advanced again, and passed triumphant, carrying with it the *Tilpa's* barge and £3,000 worth of the season's clip.

Just after daylight the savior eucalypt was torn from the soil. Stephen Been sprang to the towing-frame and cut the cable with two lightning strokes of the axe, and the *Tilpa* went full speed ahead, steering south on to the plain which was now a sea. Any one of these logs that came down with the current like stones from a sling would sink the steamer in an instant, and they tried to make for the dead water. But it took time to leave the current; its force was so great that the helm answered spasmodically, and between the spasms the engine drove the steamer down the stream with a frightful velocity. They were not caught by the dreaded wreckage—they caught it.

FINALLY, at eleven o'clock, they reached the still water covering a treeless plain and there they anchored. That plain, although the Samaritan knew it not, covered Corona station.

They breakfasted at noon, and the captain was unusually jolly. The loss of the barge did not matter much, he thought, with a curious smile on his face. He wouldn't want it any more, but he was sorry for the boy's sake, all the same.

During the afternoon the wreckage became larger. It was not confined to tree and river débris now; fence-rails, boxes, furniture and, to show how far the water could penetrate, a cradle came bobbing and turning into the haven of the steamer. They found that the cradle, by virtue of its shape, was an ark of this deluge, the rescued being mostly snakes and tarantulas and scorpions and centipedes and all the insect horrors and creeping things which no living man may imagine.

At four o'clock a hut came down, escaped from the current, careered wildly in the eddies, and then collapsed with a noise like the discharge of artillery against a tree which had so far been too strong for the flood. Then a minute later another hut, swimming high out of the water, ran down in midstream and then abeam of the *Tilpa*, suddenly shot athwart the current and collided with the same tree.

But it did not go to pieces. A projection in the timber wedged it in the tree fork, and there it stood, exposing its bulk to the swirl of the deluge. Stephen Been and the mate and Garth looked at the arrested shanty, expecting it to break up. Suddenly the Captain exclaimed, "—— if there ain't a man on the thing!" Quite as suddenly he lowered the dingey, one of the two only boats of the *Tilpa*, sprang into her, and pulled for the wreck before anybody fairly understood his intention.

He had become a Samaritan again. He had forgotten his revenge at the sight of a man in danger; he had left a haven for the jaws of death.

The man on the hut was still now. He had been waving his arms to the *Tilpa* until he saw the boat put off to his rescue.

The Samaritan pulled to the wreckage as if his own existence depended on his speed. His struggle to keep the broadside on to the boiling current was almost titanic, but at last he reached the lee of the anchored hut, and after fastening the dingey to a projecting spar, swung himself into the tree.

The castaway greeted him with a cry of joy. Stephen Been clambered on to the hut and straddled the ridge-pole, so that he was face to face with the man who had suffered the perilous voyage on the quaking building.

And then the Samaritan Been became the Convict again. His face was transfigured—he looked at the wretch whose eyes were so close to his as a terrier might look at a rat. His face expressed an awful joy—the happiness of the strong, courageous devil who finds a coward devil in his grasp.

The Informer noted that sudden change, and in the space of a thought recognized his old enemy and shrieked aloud.

"So I've got you," said Stephen Been very slowly, enjoying to the full Shaw's accession of fear. "I knew I'd get you sometime." And then, with the snarl of a wolf, "D'ye remember little Hutchins an' Peter Wells, you dirty liar? Do yer? D'ye remember Bendigo and Wood's Point? An' you're a swell now, are you? An' a squatter an' a J. P., an' all—an' ye've got a son who'd drown yer if he knew what y'are; and I've been playin' a lone 'and all me life. Through you, you dog; through you!"

The Informer opened his mouth to shriek for mercy, but the roar of the water drowned his voice, and the grip of the Captain on his wrist made him dumb.

"I'm goin' to leave ye here," said Been again. "An' it's an easier death than I meant for yer—it's an easier death than *they*'d agree to—they'll 'ave ter content themselves with it."

He spoke of "them" as if they were indeed men and not impotent shadows.

The Informer made no answer—he was dumb with terror.

"So good-by to yer," concluded the Captain. "May ye go to the hell ye sent those boys ter, an' may ye meet 'em there!"

He ceased and swung himself from the roof, but ere his foot touched the tree the Informer, mad with fear, caught his wrists in a grip of steel and screamed aloud above the artillery of the flood.

The struggle was very brief. Stephen Been wrestled with his enemy on the swaying hut for a moment and, freeing himself, reached the tree and looked down for a foothold in the boat.

But that struggle had given them both to death. The swaying of the hut had loosed the spar, and spar and boat had darted off with the current.

The convict gnashed his teeth in rage and climbed higher into the tree to signal for the other dingey. To his surprise it was not more than a dozen lengths away—the mate and the supercargo had seen the struggle and had hastened with their assistance. They steered the boat under the gum and called to Stephen Been to drop in.

"It'll hold only one more safely," advised the supercargo.

Stephen Been prepared to take the jump, and seeing him, the Informer shrieked again. Then the supercargo looked to the figure on the hut and recognized in the blood-eyed, foam-flecked, wild animal in the coverings of man—his father.

Still he did not falter. "There's only room for one," he repeated to the man whom he respected. "Jump, dad!"

Been hesitated—the expression of affection had half killed the wolf in him.

The Informer began to cry and pray and blaspheme by turns, his big round face working convulsively.

"Jump, dad!" said the supercargo. "Jump quick—we can't hold on here much longer!"

Stephen Been had decided. The wolf was altogether dead; the Samaritan breathed again.

"I'll wait till nex' time," he said. "Take this snivellin' vermin, though he ain't good enough to sit in the boat with you, George."

Even in that awful moment George Garth wondered at the words and the expression of dying hatred, but he had no time to think just then.

A crying, shivering bundle fell through the air and into the boat, and the dingey headed for the steamer, the mate calling to the Captain to hold on a little longer. But before they could reach him the great gum tree went down, and the hut, with Stephen Been perched on its roof, drifted with the boiling current.

They got away from their moorings, and had the engines going in a marvelously short time, but the hut was not then in sight. The darkness did not end the search. All through the night the *Tilpa* was a blaze of red lights tramping up and down the water-road, one moment staggering painfully up-hill against the swift stream, the next shooting like an arrow from a bow with the current; and the whistle shrieking at every pile of wreckage. At dawn they spoke of him as dead, yet they persevered in the search. They intended to find his body if they tramped the river as long as Philip Vanderdecken cruised off Table Mountain.

And at ten o'clock they found him, and he was yet alive. The house had collapsed against a heap of débris, and the timber had pinned him by the waist. During the night the pile had largely increased, and the great weight almost cut him in two. Yet he had survived the awful experience. His feet had been frozen in the icy water; his middle had been crushed by the weight of the floor-wreck, and still the wonderful vitality the convict system had developed in him had strengthened him to triumph.

He did know them as they hailed his discovery with cries of pity and affection; as they dug him clear of the débris; as they tenderly lifted his bruised body and dangling, useless limbs from wreck to raft, and from raft to the steamer-ark. He heard only the fearful chorus of the flood—the rushing of great waters and the clarion song of the New-born at its antiphon.

In the afternoon he awoke to find himself in his own berth with the supercargo bending anxiously over him.

"Oh, dad, dad!" said the young man. "You're all right, ain't you? You don't feel any pain?"

Stephen Been smiled. "I'm not all right, George; but I ain't feelin' any pain. My back's broke—that's what it is."

And then he dozed again. As the lamps were lighted he asked if the river had gone down.

"Not enough to be safe out of the dead water," the mate told him, "but they could get a boat ashore in the back-wash easily."

Then Stephen Been cried fiercely, "Let him go ashore, then! Put the vermin ashore! I'm the last of them all—don't let him see me dead!"

And wondering, they obeyed him. The supercargo, quite at a loss to account for the hatred of his father, told Garth Senior that he must quit the steamer, and a deck-hand rowed the pariah to the edge of the flood near to a point where the sight of a slush-lamp said very plainly: "I am the cheer of a man."

AT NINE the Samaritan made his will in a style peculiarly his own. He called into the cabin the cook, the engineer, the deck-hands and the gentlemen of leisure who had, in the search for him, probably for the first time in their lives become energetic, and there verbally transferred the *Tilpa* and her trade to the mate and the supercargo.

"Ye've all been called as witnesses that this day, the twenty-seventh of September, eighteen seventy-nine, I've given the *Tilpa* an' two barges at Echooky, an' the book debts, an' trade, an' all to Jim Drake an' George Garth, so help me Gawd."

And they all said they witnessed the bequest, and the ceremony was over.

Only Drake and the supercargo were to watch the sick man that night and when the cabin was cleared of the others he lay on his pillow quite exhausted.

They suggested sending to Louth for a doctor, but he said, 'A doctor could do him no good—he was cast right enough,' and so they fed his flickering strength with brandy. Despite his exhaustion, he insisted on giving them full particulars of the trade. In this way: "There was a man on Burrabogie who owed twenty-six shillings in seventy-four—nex' time you're on the 'Bidgee collect it—I don't reck'lect his name, but ye're bound to find 'im—he was a little cove with a wart under his ear and a ginger beard. When ye're up that way, too, leave a bag o' loolies with the super at Benduck; 'e's got a lot of babies an' one of 'em useter cotton ter me quite reg'lar. An' alwus give a nip to the puntman at Wilcannia, and he'll drop the rope for yer any time at night."

He fell into a half sleep towards midnight, and the watchers turned the lamp-light low. The change of light seemed to awaken him, but although he spoke again he did not regard their presence. "Up at Crismus Island there's the cunningest water-hens you ever see and when the old *Tilpa*——"

And again—"Yer can drive this yer *Tilpa* over a four-foot-six bar, an' she draws four-foot-seven." And yet again—" —— the *Saddler!* I'll beat her to Echooky blindfold!"

At two o'clock in the morning he awoke out of the present to the memories of his old life—the little Devonshire village, Maria Island, Norfolk, the beautiful hell of the Pacific, of the boy Hitchins, of Peter Wells, of old Bendigo, and then, as he came to the association with the supercargo, he made Garth's tears well anew.

"That vermin can't be yer father," said the Samaritan. And then he added, "For I love you, George, my bo'."

He lay there with his brain strangely active, thinking and sorrowing for the life that had known nor wife, nor child, nor friend—for, of even the love George Garth held for him he was as uncertain as a girl with her first sweetheart—sorrowing for his wrongs a little, but glad to know the long journey was to end at last. He had known only the embraces of the gyves and the caresses of the flogger's lash, and the memories made him break into words anew.

"I've had a hard life," he said. "A hard life it's been; an' only me an' Gawd knows it—only me an' Gawd."

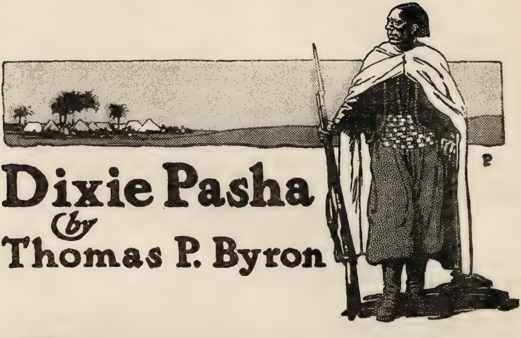
After that he lay very still for the night and most of a day, and when he awoke again the flood had retreated to the river and the *Tilpa* was stranded on the plain. Like her Captain, she would never move again.

In that hour before the dawn when the wind, laden with the death-fog, springs from the river, the Samaritan spoke with a material tongue for the last time.

"Only me an' Gawd knows it—only me an' Gawd."

And as the first rose spire of the dawn leaped from the land-rim and tinged the stranded steamer and the haggard earth with light, Stephen Been received his absolute pardon.

In the new joy of the world reprieved for yet another day, the watchers seemed to hear the song of the New-born swelling triumphant.



Dixie Pasha

by

Thomas P. Byron

THE faith of an Arab is endless, so they believed him; for he had a pale luster in his eye that might have been the fire of the desert moonlight on the nights that he had watched and prayed alone in the mountains, and his voice had a deep, tremulous sob that made the flesh of men quiver and their hearts to burn. These were his words:

"I bear the name of the Prophet and I am a Hadgi of the brotherhood of the Derkaoua. For seven years have I lived alone in abstinence and prayer on the mountain called the Ksar of the Spirits where many among you have seen me. There I have spoken with Allah, who is the one God, and with Mohammed, who is His Prophet.

"I bring to the children of Islam the message that they shall repent from their sins and smite the Roumi and drive him from the land even as far as Aïn-Sefra where they must tarry until Allah the one God and Mohammed His Prophet make known their further will through me—Mohammed Jebbour.

"Such is the command of the Most High, and in His name I proclaim the Holy War. There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet."

It was in the month of Ramadan of the thirteen-hundred and twenty-sixth year of the Hegira that Mohammed Jebbour preached the *jehad* in the oasis of Bou-Denib by the River Guir in the heart of Morocco.

The Moors believed; for it was written that a prophet should come out of the wilderness to lead Islam to its own again, and his words fanned to a blaze the fanaticism and lust for spoil that smoldered in their breasts. So the word went through the desert on the wings of the sirocco, and the oases sent their men to Bou-Denib—even from the farthest *ksars* of Tafilet. And all who heard believed, for Mohammed Jebbour was an orator, and they gave him gold and fast camels with silken palanquins and stallions whose manes and tails swept the ground, and they raked the desert over for beauty for his harem—and "Bel-hakk" the Holy One was well paid for the seven years of fast that he had spent in the Djebel-Roh praying to Allah for the sins and sons of Islam.

The news came to the outlying oasis of Oudaghir, and the Ouled Abdul Kerin, stalwart desert-robbers who preyed on the caravans of all—even the Roumi and the phantom Touareg, sent a hundred men on swift *meharis* to fight for the true faith and for spoil.

And these, pushing haughtily through the faithful to the very feet of the Hadgi, heard and believed also.

Among them was a very tall, very black negro whose face was scarred by four deep scratches that ran the length of it, just missing both eyes, and as this one heard the passionate sob of Mohammed Jebbour's voice and saw the moonlight in his eye, his imagination blazed within him and set strange little pulses to beating in his throat and the roof of his mouth—just as would have happened had he listened to the words of a Haytian voodoo-doctor or a West Coast *gree-gree* man or an exhorter at a Georgia camp-meeting.

Then he went forth from the mosque and lay under the palms by the Oued Guir and dreamed, and presently he gathered the men of Oudaghir about him and spoke to them long and eloquently. And when the dawn broke they were gone, and their caravan was like a string of black ants on the flaming eastern horizon. Surely what was written was written, and Allah and Mohammed had settled the thing once and for all, and the scar-faced negro was as fanatical a believer as any. But one can not forget ten years in the Twenty-Fifth U. S. Infantry—even in the great Sahara.

This was in the days when one French column was at Casablanca, and another marched on Fey from Northern Oran, and still another advanced on Bou-Denib from Colomb-Bechar where ends the railway that some day will reach to Tomboctou.

II

AN ADVANCE-GUARD had seized the wells at daybreak and given the Aït-Usilt warning, and at ten both wells and the pools in the *oued* were sucked dry. All the moisture of the poor little oasis had been but a drop in the bucket for such a host—six thousand men, the horses of the cavalry, and the countless camels of the caravan that bore their provender and munitions of war. By noon the Aït-Usilt had swept the village clean of their belongings, and their tiny caravan had commenced to creep away to where the oasis of their brothers, the Beni-Garfa, lay in a tremulous green blur against the sand-dunes that were flung across the horizon like a polished string of flashing topaz. There they could find water and refuge until the plague had passed by and the wells had filled again.

A company of Zouaves guarded the water and were encamped beside the dried river-bed a half-mile or so from the deserted *ksar*, and from time to time they sent the camel water-corps with a load of moisture to the column that crept by a mile distant, like a great party-colored snake whose brilliant maculations were blending to a uniform shade in the sudden dusk.

The bright uniforms of the Chasseurs and the Zouaves ceased to flash, likewise the white turbans of the Spahis and the coats of the horses, and the machine-guns strapped on the camels, and the small cannon, and the auto-mitrailleuse that snorted through sand axle-deep and over rocky *hammada*. Even the hues of the tricolor blended and the snake became bronze—all bronze, the hue of men's faces and the fine desert sand that floated about them like a veil of delicate texture.

The Zouaves began to light their camp-fires, for their orders were to hold the wells until morning, when they would procure a last supply of water before deserting them.

An hour before they had thoroughly patrolled the *ksar* and found it vacant, and its inhabitants were plain to be seen, miles away—a poverty-stricken band of weeping women, squalling children and unwarlike men. There was little danger, for the scouting cavalry had reported that there were no bodies of Arabs in the sparsely-inhabited country that they were traversing.

But their guides did not know that beyond the shoulder of the mountains that lay to the south a hundred men waited in the naked desert.

"*Regardez, mon Capitaine,*" said a *sous-officier* of the Zouaves to his superior. "Look. There is an Arab who comes from the *ksar.*"

The Captain looked in lazy curiosity. A tall, black-faced man wrapped in a white *haïk* had walked slowly down to the edge of the river, and looked curiously at the camp of the Zouaves and at the column beyond, which had stopped and was making its camp for the night.

A sentry stopped the man when he would have crossed the *oued*.

"You can not pass here," he said contemptuously.

The man's bulk and his scarred face were formidable, but who would have dreamed of danger from a single Arab when a column of six thousand troops lay only a mile away, when the tents of a company of Zouaves lay just beyond the *oued?* The sentry did not think that already the darkness was blotting out the *ksar*—which was tiny, but a labyrinth—and that beyond that lay the great refuge, the great hiding-place, the desert.

The Arab smiled and made as if to turn. With a swift movement he seized the end of the musket and, wriggling aside from the thrust, tore it from the sentry's hands, turned it about and drove it through his breast with a single motion.

The other sentinel shouted and would have fired, but the Arab was upon him with a bound. The soldier threw up his weapon in defense and the bayonets locked. The negro forced him backward, jerked his weapon free and a sudden left-handed thrust sent the blade out six inches behind the Zouave's back.

The assassin planted his foot on the dead man's breast and drew the bayonet forth, seized the other gun and leaped away.

Balls whistled about his ears, twenty Zouaves sprang in pursuit, but a sharp command brought them back. The officer was furious.

"Why didn't you kill him—the rest of you?" he demanded while they gazed in consternation on their slain comrades.

It had suddenly become entirely dark and he redoubled the guard. "Shoot every thing that moves!" was his last command.

It was incredible—two sentries killed within fifty yards of the camp! And the murderer had escaped! Well, to-morrow there would be reprisal, for a squadron of Spahis or Chasseurs d'Afrique would be sent to Beni-Garfa where the assassin had undoubtedly fled.

THERE was no moon, but the night was clear, with the soft luster of the stars. The Milky Way shone like an incandescent ribbon of gauze stretched across the sky, and the shooting-stars fell like rockets all about the horizon. The long line of camp-fires of the column glowed like splashes of vermilion on the murk of the earth. Their light was reassuring, yet the sentinels of the Zouaves were uneasy.

It was the desert, mysterious, threatening and ravenous, that seemed to draw up closer and shut them in with horrors that waited just beyond the circle of light.

It was after midnight when a sentry thought that he saw something move in the dry bed of the *oued*. He watched it a moment and then raised his gun. But a hand was slapped over his mouth, his head was jerked backwards, a razor-edged *secquin* was drawn softly across his throat, and he fell back into a pair of arms that laid him carefully on the ground. It is a very simple thing for a twain that have worked together before.

But some one bungled a bit somewhere, for one Zouave managed to let off his gun.

The hubbub of screams and occasional shots that came faintly to the ears of the column lasted but a few moments and ceased altogether just as a Zouave, weaponless and breathless, burst in, gasping of an attack. The drums rolled the call to arms, and the column quickly formed. But the expected attack did not come, although the first Zouave was followed by a dozen corroborative others.

The Spahis, circling quickly about, came to the camp by the river. It was silent and the fires were extinguished. The rest of the Zouaves were there, and a dozen or so of Arabs to boot, but not many; the attack had been too sudden and overwhelming. Also there were a few rifles that had been overlooked, but not many of these, either.

It was a stunning blow. A company of Zouaves wiped out in five minutes within a mile of the main column!

The next day the punitive expedition went through Beni-Garfa with fire and sword. Of course the people there were not the assassins, but they must have known and should have told. And a lesson was never amiss among the children of the Prophet.

"It was a man of genius who planned that attack!" said the French General. "He has modern guns and plenty of ammunition. We shall find him at Bou-Denib with Mohammed Jebbour."

IN THE meantime the men of Oudaghir were dreaming, while the negro harangued them in his broken Arabic. He had been a marvel to them when he first came amongst them as a slave. He had been a marvel since, and now he was thrice a marvel that he had planned this wonderful coup and won for them the weapons of their dreams. And Sam Ames, once of the Twenty-Fifth U. S. Infantry, and more recently an outlaw in the Republic of Liberia, looked on the eagle-eyed, hook-nosed sons of the desert that gathered about him with their bayoneted rifles and his chest swelled with joy. He had found the soldiers of his dreams.

So he drilled them and drilled them and drilled them relentlessly, under a sun that would have turned to molten metal the spinal column of a white man. Never soldiers toiled like these in the long days that he kept them at a tiny oasis behind the Djebel and filled them with his own fierce ambitions. And presently they were letter-perfect, ran to ranks like madmen at his shout, went through the manual with dash and precision, aligned the while straight as a string, maneuvered, marched in fours, formed in a square, fired in volleys, went through the bayonet-drill and lunged with the terrible left-handed thrust with which he had killed the Zouave at the wells of Aït-Usilt.

There were eighty of them that had the new weapons, and one morning when he had drilled them, he paused, flashed a proud glance upon their gleaming eyes and bayonets and shouted a single word: "Bou-Denib!"

"Bou-Denib!" they roared back hoarsely, and the march began, the others following with the camels.

They never took the bayonets from their guns, did these soldiers. Sam Ames loved cold steel so—and intended to use it on the day that the Spahis of Mohammed Jebbour smote the Roumi.

Presently, as he listened to the measured swish of their feet in the sand, out of pure exultation Sam Ames began to sing. It was a song that he had sung to them a thousand times before, and not one among them but knew its meaningless words by heart. For there was that within it that made them grip their weapons hard and filled their breast with tumult like the words of Mohammed Jebbour.

So presently one took up the words in his harsh, guttural voice and then another and another, until the whole of the eighty chanted it forth, mangling the words and tune, but getting the fire and the rhythm of the thing.

Something caught in Sam Ames' throat and a mist passed before his eyes. "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet!" he muttered under his breath, and then he marched straighter and prouder than ever.

His soldiers were singing *his* song!

III

ALL the Spahis of Mohammed Jebbour rode in fantasia on the narrow plain that lay between a hill, which dominated all the country, and the Oued Guir, which separated it from the *palmeraie* and town of Bou-Denib.

The Hadgi himself, green-turbaned and white-robed, mounted on a milk-white stallion and surrounded by the sheiks, reviewed them as they rode about like men of quicksilver in seemingly inextricable confusion, firing their long fusils, throwing them high in the air and catching them again, with their long white robes flying a dozen feet behind them, grazing each other continually, yet never colliding. At the end of the plain they gathered and swept down in a cloud and stopped suddenly with a great shout, pulling their horses back upon their haunches.

The heart of the Hadgi swelled with belief in his own prophecies. Could the Roumi stand against Spahis such as these?

Again they wheeled and rode away and circled about again, but this time a body of them whirled past the flank of the hill.

"Look!" said a sheik to the Hadgi. "A caravan is coming. More Spahis."

Shrunk to Lilliputian size and distinct though tremulous of outline in the palpitating heat, a body of footmen were approaching. Behind them were others with camels. There was the beating of drum and the chant of a song.

The fantasia swept out and around them, yet still they came on, the drums beating, the song swelling louder, the sun glittering on their weapons.

Mohammed Jebbour saw that it was a company of men marching regularly in the order of the Roumi. Suddenly, at a shout from their leader, they swung out and advanced in a single line to within twenty feet of the Hadgi and the sheiks.

Their leader shouted another command, the song ceased and they halted, aligned straight as a string, heads on high, rigid of body.

A third time their chief roared a command and eighty muskets came forward as one in rattling salute to the Hadgi, and from eighty throats boomed out in unison the creed of Islam:

"There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet!"

The wondering Arabs pressed close on their heels, but the soldiers of the line stood like rocks. Mohammed Jebbour stretched forth both hands and there was silence.

He stared in wonder at the huge negro before him, at his scarred face and jet-black skin.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"We are men of Oudaghir come to fight the Roumi."

"Your speech is not that of a Moor. Whence come you?"

"I come from a country of unbelievers that lies across the great salt water. I was a soldier there. I came to the desert from the fever country of the black men that lies far beyond Sus. I was a soldier there, too. First I was a slave in Oudaghir. With four others I escaped. We were chained together by the neck, and a lion killed the four others, one by one. At the end I killed the lion. Then they took me back to Oudaghir and made me free, for they saw that I was protected of Allah. There be men of Oudaghir here who knew me when I was a slave."

"Are you a true believer?" asked Mohammed Jebbour, amazed.

"There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet. When I became a true believer they gave me the name of Mohammed."

"And you wish to fight the Roumi?"

"We wish to fight the Roumi. I and these men of Oudaghir have taken these weapons from a company of the Roumi that we slew at the wells of Aït-Usilt——"

A murmur went through the crowd. They had heard of the exploit at Aït-Usilt.

"These men of Oudaghir obey me as their sheik," went on the negro. "I have taught them to fight after the fashion of the Nasrani. You shall see."

He shouted a command and the Arabs gave them room as they began to maneuver. They went through the manual of arms like automatons worked by a machine. Then they marched and wheeled and threw themselves into a square with fixed bayonets, while Mohammed Jebbour and the sheiks rode slowly about the wall of bristling steel that met them everywhere. Then the negro from the center shouted hoarsely and they divided into two bodies, rushed upon each other fiercely with a shout of "Dickshi! Dickshi!" and their bayonets locked and clashed.

The eyes of Mohammed Jebbour kindled and his tremulous voice was deep. "It is plain that ye are good Spahis," he said. "The men of Oudaghir shall be my bodyguard. They shall fight under my eye and they shall throw about me that wall of steel on the day that we smite the Roumi! And you—you shall be their sheik and a pasha! Peace be with you!"

Thus Mohammed of Oudaghir became pasha of the bodyguard of the Hadgi Mohammed Jebbour who led the *jehad*, and he was honored among the sheiks and holy men. But the eighty that he led called him always Dixie Pasha—Dickshi Pasha, to be exact, for the song that he and they sang; and they themselves were called by all the faithful "the Left-handed Eighty of Dickshi Pasha."

And their leader drilled them and drilled them and drilled them, while the other Spahis rode in fantasia and sharpened their lances and simitars and loaded their long fusils with round stones and scraps of iron, cunningly piecing out their scanty powder with fine black sand, against the coming of the Roumi.

But Dixie Pasha—no wonder his heart swelled within him and he dreamed dreams! Eighty Spahis—eighty giants—who fought to obey his slightest command, who sang *his* song, who drilled like men of steel all day in the grilling sun; and each one of them had a modern rifle with a bayonet on the end of it and a belt full of cartridges! Surely the name of Dixie Pasha was to be written in great letters on the sands of Bou-Denib. It was Kismet.

And presently the Roumi came.

IV

THIS guides had told him that the hill at the end of the little plain beyond the river dominated Bou-Denib and the surrounding country, and it was there that the French General had determined to plant his six-pounders to bombard the town. It was there also that Mohammed Jebbour, in the midst of his sheiks and the eighty, watched the approach of the column. The whole battlefield was spread beneath them like a great panorama illustrated by tiny, movable puppets. The incredible clearness of the desert air rendered every detail and every movement patent, although the actors were dwarfed to miniature as if they were beheld through the wrong end of a telescope.

On the town side the hill dropped abruptly to the narrow plain; beyond lay the river like a sheet of quicksilver, and then Bou-Denib, half-hidden behind the motionless fronds of the *palmeraie*, its blue-washed walls and house-tops crowded with women and children. Even a couple of priests could be seen on the minaret of the mosque.

But not a sound came to the hill. In the other direction the French column advanced in the form of a rectangle. The caravans had been left behind; the infantry formed the lines; within were the cavalry and artillery. A crowd of Arabs hung on either flank and kept up a continual harassing. Each puff of smoke when a gun was fired rose like a tiny white cloud. All day the French had been kept so continually on the alert that their nerves were worn to a raw edge. No one knew how many men Mohammed Jebbour had, and the desert as far as they could see was swarming with them.

And lives were cheap in the desert—Mohammedan lives were doubly cheap. At times the Arabs took advantage of a rise of ground to make a frantic charge and were swept back by the volleys of the infantry.

Soon the pops of the firing began to come to the Hadgi's ear as they drew nearer. The French could see him too plainly as he stood high on the crest of the hill in his green turban and snow-white *haïk*. He was within range and Dixie Pasha, who knew it, wondered why they did not open fire, for the sun was sinking and in a few moments it would be dark and too late.

He knew that the attack was to take place when it grew dark enough to get to close quarters without being swept down by the volleys. But the French were old hands at this sort of business. They, too, were waiting for the darkness to come—to administer a crushing blow.

"That is the Hadgi on the hill yonder," thee General had said. "Just before the Arabs start to charge, shell it and sweep in with mitrailleuse. When the enemy break and retreat, let the cavalry follow them around both sides of the hill and let the infantry support them. The hill is very difficult of descent on the other side, the guides say, and if he waits there a few moments longer we will get him."

But Dixie Pasha had a keen eye and he knew the warfare of the Roumi. When they trained the machine-guns and six-pounders on the hill he threw his men around the Hadgi and the sheiks and hustled them over the summit. At the same moment the cry of "Allah il Allah!" thundered from the plain below and the thousands of Arabs swept forward in a universal charge.

But they were not met by volleys this time. The infantry opened up and the machine-guns began to rattle when the Arabs were only a hundred yards away. They swept the floor of the desert clear in a moment and then the infantry poured a volley into the Arabs that completed the work, and the Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique rode out and cut down the few that had got to close quarters. But the bulk of the Arabs had broken and fled under the withering hail of the machine-guns.

Shells were bursting on the hill-top too, but the men of Dixie Pasha, with the Hadgi in their midst, were picking their way with difficulty down its precipitous farther side. A company or two of the Foreign Legion took the hill, on one side of it the Spahis swept at a trot, followed closely by the Zouaves and Legionaries, on the other side the Chasseurs d'Afrique pursued, the Algerian Tirailleurs at their heels. It grew totally dark with the suddenness of the desert; the stars came out and a thread of moon swung over the minaret of the mosque dimly outlined against the sky.

The Arabs had seen the Hadgi himself flee in the last gleams of light, and never drew rein until they had splashed through the *oued* and were gathered on the farther shore. And Dixie Pasha, with his eighty men thrown about the Hadgi and his sheiks, reached the foot of the hill just as the two wings of French troops came curving around its flanks.

They met out beyond him in the center of the plain, between him and Bou-Denib. He was caught between them like a grain of corn between two millstones.

But first the millstones were to grind each other a bit.

The Spahis galloped up in the darkness. The sound of their hoofs was like far-muttering thunder, but only their white turbans were visible at a distance of fifty yards. The Chasseurs and Tirailleurs were waiting, and the last poured a volley into them, and then the Chasseurs were out to meet the charge with drawn swords. They in their turn were riddled by the blast of a volley from the Zouaves and Legionaries, and it was only when the cavalry gasped under the steel that they realized the horrible mistake and recognized each other for friends.

On both sides the infantry had pressed forward at their heels, and the whole plain was lighted with the flashes of continual fusillades. The same cry echoed from everywhere at once.

"We are friends! You are firing on us—the Spahis—upon us the Chasseurs—upon us the Legionaries! Stop firing! Stop firing!"

The firing ceased, and they drew back and stared at each other, officers and men screaming questions and answers all at once.

"Where is the enemy?" they demanded. "The marabout—has he reached the town?"

Quick commands that rang out from the foot of the hill were their answer, and a volley swept a lane through them as a bowl clears an alley of ten-pins.

Again the cry of "Stop firing!" arose, and the soldiers sprang in a disorderly mass toward those who, they thought, had made this new blunder. Another volley met them, a hoarse chant arose, and the next instant a body of men were upon them, singing as they charged, with fixed bayonets.

Again the French fell back, screaming that they were friends. They could not believe otherwise. Arabs firing in volleys and fighting with bayonets! It was incredible.

An American negro of the Foreign Legion sprang before the advancing square. "Who yoh-all?" he cried. "Who yoh-all dat sing 'Dixie'?"

A bayonet through his breast was his answer, and the French, understanding at last, leaped upon them with screams of rage. These were the men who had slain the Zouaves at the wells of Aït-Usilt! Their leader was a renegade who had planned the attack and who had taught them to fire in volley and to fight with bayonets!

The Arabs met them with a wall of bristling steel, and the march of the eighty across the plain was begun. They had only three hundred yards to go to gain the river, but it must be cut through the mass of humanity before them with the bayonet.

They were in the square formation that Dixie Pasha had taught them, the Hadgi and the sheiks were in the middle, and the same single idea dominated each breast. The Hadgi must be carried in safety to Bou-Denib that he might lead the faithful to victory on the morrow.

The French infantry leaped on them and died on the left-handed bayonet thrusts; the cavalry rode at them over friend and foe, and horses and riders went down slashed to ribbons. The barrier of steel was always there and it ripped its way through them as a circle-saw rips through a log, and the eighty stamped their dead foes under foot and climbed over them steadily toward the river, cutting their way through flesh and blood, bone and sinew, leaving a trail of crushed humanity in their wake.

They all knew that it would be but a moment before the host beyond the river would understand and come charging to their rescue. And yet—could they last that moment? Two soldiers stood in the place of every one that was cut down; the Arabs ceased to sing and panted as they fought, holding their formation with utmost difficulty, for the enemy never relaxed his deadly compression, but cursed and tore at them and dragged them forth with their naked hands while the bayonets and sabers clashed against each other in their bodies.

Yet always the square was a square, and always the Hadgi was in the center of it, and always it moved onward as they shrieked their cries of "Allah il Allah!" and "Dickshi! Dickshi!" while they drove their bayonets home with their terrible left-handed thrusts.

But the square and the eighty shrank and shrank and shrank—like a snowball under a July sun.

Dixie Pasha's head was gaping under a saber-cut, his breast and legs were slashed, yet he felt a wild thrill of joy as his men, under his hoarse commands, kept their formation and protected the Hadgi, and he fought with superhuman strength, heedless of his wounds. They were hemmed in by a world of enemies that was crushing them in ever-tightening constrictions and then—from the *oued* came a fierce yell of "Allah, il Allah!" as the Arabs charged to their rescue in a body.

The French met them with a straggling fire. The more recently arrived infantry which had still maintained its formation riddled them with volleys and drove them back. But the first furious charge had carried them to the heart of the tumult, where the remnant of the eighty still guarded the Hadgi, and when the Arabs fell back across the *oued* they carried the square with them.

Mohammed Jebbour was there and unharmed; at least a dozen of the eighty were there, and Dixie Pasha was there. As they splashed into the water he fell and was caught up by two of his men. One of them sobbed deep in his throat. They carried him across the river on their arms.

He heard the gurgling of the water and the irregular firing of the French, who had ceased to pursue on the edge of the *oued*. Above the minaret of the mosque he could see the moon pared down to a fragment of its glorious self, as was he—as were his Spahis. No, they were still there, for they were singing his song as they carried him—the song that had made him a soldier when he was known as the blackest nigger in New Orleans.

It sounded something like this:

"Am sufern landt ah tek mah standt
Andt luff am dhoi am Dickshi."

Yes, they were there, and to-morrow, when he was rested, they would smite the Roumi, for the Hadgi was saved; and they would get more guns—and cannon—and he—Sam Ames—would drill them all—all the thousands of Mohammed Jebbour, and their army would sweep——

But he was very tired and must rest now. So Dixie Pasha closed his eyes.

WHEN the square was sucked back in the backwater of the charge the French had fired until they judged the enemy were safe beyond the walls of the town. Then orders rang out sharply, and they ran about seeking their commands, and the jumble became an orderly body of troops again.

Suddenly they all fell silent, for across the water they could hear the Arabs singing an air that dwindled away amongst the palms and maze of the streets of Bou-Denib. It came faint and hoarse and defiant through the soft desert night.

"What a terrible war-song!" said an officer.

"What soldiers!" said another.

"Hark! How the music carries!" said the first. "You can hear them singing it yet."

Yes, they were singing it yet, for the fragment of the eighty knew that Dixie Pasha was in Paradise with Allah and Mohammed and the bulk of his Spahis, and they were singing *his* song as they carried his body to its tomb.

THE following morning at daybreak a shell tore a hole in the minaret of the mosque, and then another and another. The faithful, their hearts full of fanaticism and greed for spoil, charged forth across the plain where Dixie Pasha and his left-handed eighty had died.

The shells burst among them as they huddled together, the machine-guns swept them down like meadow-grass before the scythe, and when thousands of them lay dead and the shells had shattered the town, they submitted themselves.

Mohammed Jebbour had disappeared, so they sat down to wait until another holy one might bring the message from Allah and Mohammed to destroy the Nasrani. For the patience and faith of an Arab are endless.

DYNAMITE STORIES

by Hudson Maxim

EDITOR'S NOTE—The name of Hudson Maxim, author of the accompanying series of Dynamite Stories, is perhaps the most distinguished in the development of high explosives and kindred inventions. First to make smokeless powder in the United States, he has worked with dynamite, maximite, stabilite and motorite, with torpedoes and rams, with projectiles and armor-plate, with automatic guns and detonating fuses, as a veritable familiar of these grim agents of destruction. Long the most famous inventor in his field, he has gathered many an anecdote of explosion. Though some of these stories make saturnine sport of death, they are unique in their crisp dramatic quality, and ADVENTURE is fortunate in giving them to its readers.

THE SINGULAR GOOD FORTUNE OF AN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

IT SO happened that during a tour of inspection seven of us were together, going over the works. On entering the guncotton dry-house, I noticed a strong odor of nitric acid.

"Out of here—quick!" I cried. "The place is going to blow up!"

There were perhaps a hundred pounds of dry guncotton in the room at the time, spread out in pans. As was afterward learned, the foreman, being in a hurry for the guncotton, had turned live steam into the pipes instead of circulating hot water through them as instructed.

We were barely out of the room when the guncotton burned with a flash, wrecking the building, and setting fire to the fragments. I was just congratulating myself that no one had been injured by the explosion, when it was discovered that one of the party, the Englishman, the even tenor of whose way nothing could accelerate or disturb, who feared nothing, had not quite made up his mind in time to get out of the room before the flash occurred. On seeing him emerge at last from the zone of destruction, I was horror-stricken, for apparently every hair had been burned from his head and face, while shreds of skin hung from his hands and cheeks and brow; the dark portions of his eyes even were white under the influence of the dreadful shock he had undergone.

Nevertheless, the Englishman's usual phlegmatic manner was wholly unruffled, and he spoke in his conventional voice, hardly tinged with enthusiasm:

"I say, Mr. Maxim, you know, it's not often one has the chance to witness what actually occurs, by Jove!"

LIVING BOMBS

AN AMERICAN reporter, who was with the Japanese during the Manchurian campaign, told me the following story:

Column after column of Japanese had assaulted a Russian position, the capture of which was exceedingly desirable. Column after column of the brave little fellows were swept down by the unerring gun-fire of the Russians, but each time a few Japanese would scale the works, and go over them, only to be slain by the Russians inside.

There was a lull for a short space, and the reporter thought, as doubtless did the Russians, that the Japanese had given up the task, when suddenly a troop of perhaps a hundred Japanese rushed forward, without arms, in a widely scattered line. Onward they flew toward the Russian camp, and, as they went up, there was a blaze of the Russian rifles, and half the Japanese column disappeared with a flash and a tremendous report. They had *exploded!*

Each of them had been loaded with an infernal machine, hung across his breast and across his back upon his shoulders, so that, when struck by a bullet, he would explode and hurl death and destruction all around him.

The Russians were so astounded, so paralyzed by the spectacle and by the unexpectedness of it that they ceased firing, while the remaining living bombs scaled the ramparts and leaped in among their enemies, who instantly vacated the place, flying like rats from a sinking ship.

DYNAMITE'S FREAK

A CONTRACTOR, who does business up in New York State, told me the following story:

A carload of nitro-gelatin dynamite had been shipped to him, but was held up in a freight-house for a day or two before delivery. One night there was an alarm of fire. Looking out, he was astounded to see that it was the freight-house burning. Knowing that his carload of dynamite would be sure to explode, he started to run to the scene in all haste, to warn the firemen and others to keep far away from the inevitable explosion, when suddenly there was a great burst of flame, which shot high into the sky and flared out bright and wild in all directions, sending up an enormous column of smoke. But this fierce combustion lasted only a few minutes and then subsided.

He knew that his dynamite had burned up, and, curiously enough, without exploding.

He met the fire-chief after the conflagration and they spoke of the fire. The chief remarked that there must have been some very combustible freight on one of the cars burned. He said that, when the fire first started, the firemen played a full stream of water on this car, but it did not do any good. The car burned so fast and so fiercely that they had to rush away for their lives, or they would have been consumed by the intense heat, and he wondered what it could be that would burn so savagely.

When told that it was a carload of dynamite he felt like a man who discovers the next day that he had walked along the edge of a high precipice at night.

Although dynamite in such quantities as a carload would be almost certain to explode, sometimes even that quantity will take fire and burn up completely without exploding; while, at other times a single stick of dynamite when ignited will detonate.

THE DOG THAT ATE DYNAMITE

IN the early nineties I was experimenting with a new fulminate compound as a detonator for fuses in high-explosive projectiles. The compound consisted of fulminate of mercury, gelatinated with guncotton.

One of my workmen had a pup of a miscellaneous breed, which would eat anything under the sun that he could masticate. One day his master gave him about half a pound of this fulminate compound. Another of the workmen put some metallic sodium and dry fulminate into a gelatin capsule, stuck this into the end of a quintuple dynamite cap, wrapped the whole thing in a piece of meat, and, calling the dog out into the field, made him stand up and "speak" for it. Then he dropped it into the dog's throat and it was swallowed at a gulp.

The next instant, the latter workman's own dog, which he prized very highly, came upon the scene and entered into a very brisk wrestling-bout with the dog that had been charged. Before he could call him away, there was a terrific explosion, and both dogs instantly vanished from this vale of tears.

THE RACE WITH DEATH

AMONG the many dynamite-plants that hang upon the verdant hills of New Jersey, there is one which stands somewhat apart from the railroad, and the dynamite has to be carted to the station over the highway. At one point the highway passes close to the edge of a precipice of considerable height, at the bottom of whose abrupt, ragged sides nestles a pleasant villa, owned by a wealthy New York business man.

I had just paid a visit to this factory of explosives, and was walking leisurely along the road. At a distance of perhaps a hundred yards ahead of me there was one of the dynamite wagons, moving two tons of dynamite to the railroad. The driver had recently purchased a couple of fresh horses, which he pronounced "a spanking pair." They were rather restive and shied at everything they saw. But the driver was a brave fellow and a strong one, and he had no fear of being unable to control them.

All at once, under the impulse of a gust of wind, a newspaper flared up in front of them. Quick as a flash, they bolted, rushing headlong, the bits held firmly between their teeth; while the high-piled load of dynamite swayed from side to side menacingly as the wagon took the short curves of the road.

At this instant the foreman of the dynamite-works flashed by, driving a pair of horses to an empty wagon. He had observed the plight of the driver of the dynamite wagon, and was lashing his horses in a mad pursuit.

Although the foreman's team was inferior, still his wagon was empty, and he was soon neck and neck with the runaway horses. For several hundred yards it was a close race, neither one achieving any appreciable advantage over the other. Nearer and nearer were they coming to the precipice, which yawned just where the road turned sharply to the right. Still on and on they flew, when, in a moment of advantage, the foreman leaped from his wagon, full upon the neck and head of the nigh horse of the runaway pair, and brought the team to a standstill within less than fifty feet of the precipice and directly over the villa I have mentioned.

Had not this driver possessed both the presence of mind and the athletic qualifications necessary, coupled with great daring, that load of dynamite must inevitably have gone over the precipice as the horses struck the curve. Little the peaceful occupants of the villa under the hill imagined what a calamity at that fearful moment overhung them!

THE LOADED CHINAMAN

During the Russo-Japanese war a certain officer of the Czar, who was an impatient, overbearing person and a great martinet, had a Chinese servant whom he treated with the utmost harshness. One of his favorite methods of inflicting punishment for offenses was to order the Chinaman to leave his presence and, as the fellow went, to give him a hard kick.

The Chinaman aired his grievances one day to a Japanese spy, whom he took to be a brother Chinaman. The Jap suggested padding the seat of the Chinaman's trousers to prevent further contusions, and this was done, the padding being furnished by the Jap. A rubber hot-water bag was filled with nitroglycerin, and percussion caps were placed in positions where they would be exploded by any sudden blow. The unfortunate Chinaman was wholly unaware of the nature of the padding.

At the next meeting of the Russian with his servant, the poor Oriental inadvertently spilled some tea upon the officer's new uniform. The enraged master proceeded to dismiss the Chinaman from his presence in the usual way, but with somewhat more precipitation.

One of the officer's legs was blown off, one arm was crushed to pulp, four ribs were broken, and it was more than a day before he was restored to consciousness. When he did come to, he found himself a prisoner in a Japanese hospital, having been left behind by the retreating Russians.

As to the Chinaman himself, poor fellow, he never knew that he had been loaded.

BETWEEN THE TIERS

The cold-storage plant of a dynamite-factory blew up and sent a rain of large stones over the countryside to an astonishing distance. In a dynamite-magazine half a mile away there was piled tier on tier of high explosives. One of the flying stones descended through the steel roof of this magazine, as if opposed by nothing stronger than paper. It dropped between two of the piles of boxed high explosives and penetrated the floor.

The diameter of that stone, as they found when they dug it out of the floor, was just eleven inches; the space between the tiers was just fourteen inches.

THE ONLY WAY

I WAS once called in as an expert to visit a dynamite-plant where a new form of high explosive was being manufactured instead of the ordinary nitroglycerin dynamite. This consisted of a mixture of chlorate of potash, sulphur, charcoal and paraffin wax. The inventor of it had concocted the reassuring name, "XX Safety Dynamite."

Unfortunately this safety mixture went off unexpectedly, with no apparent cause, and drove a crowbar deftly through the head of one of the workmen. This unscheduled performance awakened the apprehension of the president of the company, who was also the chief backer, and he grew suspicious as to the exact amount of safety in the mixture. On that account I was summoned, and the president himself accompanied me to inspect the plant.

When we were close to the factory, a sudden explosion occurred which shook the earth for miles, and a tremendous pall of smoke instantly covered the sky. Going on, after a moment of stunned pause, we found that the site of the plant was now one vast crater, around which lay a litter of débris. A number of men had been in the factory at the time of the catastrophe. Now the sole survivor was walking busily about the crater, with a basket on his arm, picking up bits of something from the ground here and there.

As he observed us, he spoke casually:

"I can't find much of the boys. I guess you'll have to plow this ground, if you want to bury 'em!"

THE BOMB AND THE TRAIN

ONE of the most anxious moments that I ever experienced was during some experiments in throwing aerial torpedoes from a four-inch cannon at Maxim.

These torpedoes were about four feet in length, charged with a very powerful high explosive and armed with a detonating fuse. We had successfully fired several of them into a sand-butt, where they exploded with great violence. There were six of them. Five had been fired, and the sixth was loaded into the gun ready to be discharged, when a passenger train hove in sight and was passing us about a thousand feet away when the gun was fired.

We had no idea of there being any danger to the train, as its position was at right-angles to the line of fire and each of the preceding projectiles had behaved so well. But this time the torpedo glanced from the sand-butt and went after that train. We stood paralyzed with dread as we saw it pass over the train, close to the roof of a car, and strike in the swamp just beyond it, perhaps a couple of hundred feet behind the track. An inverted cone of black earth shot up, followed by a dull sound.

In imagination we had witnessed a frightful catastrophe, the wreck of a passenger train, with fearful loss of life, and all the horror of our own resultant predicament. Now that the danger was past, the even tenor of our way did take on a new relish. What objects we are, after all, of the mercy of chance!

PATRIOTS SELF-DOOMED

DURING the Russo-Japanese war, more than one of the Czar's warships disappeared without leaving a trace. I received the following narrative somewhat indirectly, and for that reason I do not dare to vouch for its truth. Its origin, as I was given to understand, was a Japanese officer, who revealed the facts while in a mood more confidential than is customary among his kind.

This officer held a command at the time on board a torpedo-boat. In the flotilla there was a torpedo-boat that carried neither guns or torpedoes. For that matter, air-compressors and every mechanical device not absolutely essential to the navigation of the craft had been removed to lighten it. It was then loaded with the most deadly explosives to the fullest capacity that it could carry at high speed. Next, a call was issued for volunteers to make up the small crew necessary for navigating the boat. The Japanese officer declared that ten times the number required offered themselves, despite the fact that they were well aware that those who voyaged in this vessel went to certain death.

The flotilla was steaming slowly along a short distance out at sea from Port Arthur, in the dead of night, when the huge gray bulk of a Russian warship loomed up in the dark, just in front. The dynamite-laden torpedo-boat, which in itself constituted an enormous floating mine, made a dash, head-on, then veered abruptly, just as she went alongside. At that instant, the doomed Japanese crew sprang their mine.

The explosion blew in the whole side of the huge warship, and hurled her decks and guns high in air. She went down in fragments, like a rain of stones.

The patriotic death of the Japanese was accomplished in the same moment. Such bravery in the service of their country may have been equaled in history, but certainly it has never been excelled.

BREAKING HIS NERVE

JUST back upon the hills that rise up from the southern shores of Lake Hopatcong there is one of the most important dynamite-works in the country. James Wentworth began his labors there, first as an errand-boy at the age of twelve, soon after the works started. It was his brag that he had grown up with the works, but that he had never gone up with them when by some freak of chance a packing-house or a nitroglycerin apparatus would be blown to the four winds of heaven, spraying wreckage of men and timber over the whole celestial concave.

Jim had no lack of courage. He had worked in every department of the business: had made nitroglycerin, nitro-gelatin, and had become one of the most skilful dynamite-packers. As he did piece-work, he made money rapidly.

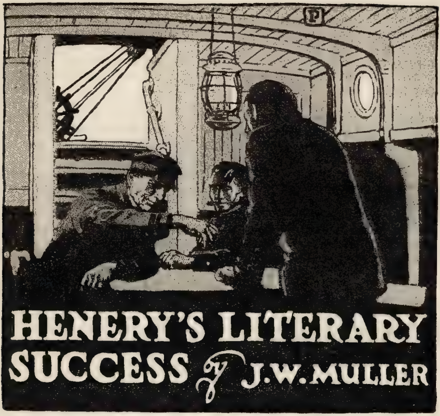
One day, at a church strawberry festival, he was drawn into the vortex of that swirling passion—love—and married. The young wife importuned him to give up the dynamite business, as he had already laid up sufficient money to start him in another field. Yielding to her wishes, he gave notice that his resignation was to take effect at the end of two weeks.

On the third day of the period of his notice, on the advent of the noon-hour, he was seized with an uncontrollable impulse to take his dinner-pail and himself out of the packing-house where he was working. He said afterward that he got to thinking: "Suppose this packing-house should blow up; what would become of Susie?"—to say nothing of his own dispersion.

He went to the top of a little knoll to eat his dinner, in full view of the packing-house, continuing his pessimistic reflections.

The place began to look suspicious. For the first time in his life, he felt fear. On a sudden that packing-house became a white, dazzling ball of flame, and he was knocked down by the concussion.

He told the superintendent that the three days he had served on his notice must suffice. He had lost his nerve!



HENERY'S LITERARY SUCCESS

by J. W. MULLER

THE *Flying Squid* lay in harbor. She had been doing it too long. The masters of prowling harbor craft had fallen mechanically into the habit of saluting with the friendliness of old neighbors. Henry had made himself hopelessly unpopular with his superior officers by entirely unnecessary discoveries as to the growth of sea-weed on the schooner's sides. The mental barometric pressure of Captain Julius Moses was low. He looked with a gloomy eye at the log wherein Mr. William Bowsun set forth continually and faithfully, with no attempt to disguise a great truth by puerile variety of wording: "Frates scares. So ends this day."

"Frates" were "scares" because business was "scares." Business was "scares" because the ant-heap of Uncle Sams and John Bulls and Jean Crapauds and John Chinos was at one of its chronic stages when each monomaniac ant had labored frantically at carrying rubbish into the hill till no ant wanted anything that any other ant had.

The ant that made shoes had made more shoes than there were feet. The ant that made combs had underestimated entirely the preponderating majority of bald-headed ants. The iron-mongering ant had produced more frying-pans than there were omelets. Even the financier ant had attained the feat of producing more stock certificates than there were fools.

That sort of thing is known by the human ants as business depression or financial stringency. Then financiers, who have worked on the simple ethics that sufficient for the day is to skin through it, fail to skin through and their golden hides are hung up as trophies by wiser financiers. Banks discover with ever-fresh amazement that when depositors stop bringing money, there is no money; and they count their securities and find them insecurities. Then the *Flying Squid* and other engines of human commerce sit idle. And the engineers of the engines have time to listen to words of wisdom.

Captain Julius Moses of the *Flying Squid* read everything that was printed, undismayed by the amount of it, hoping to get a great light on why "frates" were "scares."

Unfortunately, financial experts and newspapers use the occult form of speech so justly popular with persons who write sonnets. Furthermore, it was discouraging, when he found an excellent explanation, to pick up the next paper and find an explanation still more excellent but entirely different.

Bill Bowsun shook his ornately carved but somewhat square head disapprovingly when Captain Moses laid before him the anthology of wisdom. "What's that there law of supply and demand, as they're talkin' about?" he grumbled. "Where is it? Here be we, waitin' for freight. We're a demand, ain't we? Why don't that there law bring that there supply o' freight?"

Captain Moses, struck by this clear point of view, pulled his little beard, and considered. "I'll tell you why!" said he, brightening. "Here it is, Bill! This paper says that supply always, in-ex-or-ably, follows demand—no! That ain't it. Here it is! This other paper, here! It says that demand follows supply. You see now, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I see! I see!" responded Mr. Bowsun. "It's easy. If the wind didn't blow, the *Flying Squid's* sails wouldn't be no use, and if the *Flying Squid* didn't have sails, the blowin' of the wind wouldn't be no use. I know one thing, though. That feller as said that supply only follers demand, he never seen Henery. And I know another thing. That other feller as said demand follers supply, let him tell me why there ain't a demand for fleas."

Captain Moses mused. "It's a deep subject, Bill. It's deep. I can't rightly explain it, but it's got something to do with financial stuff. Listen to this."

Mr. Bowsun's eyes fixed themselves rigidly in the direction of the wide blue skies while Captain Moses read a long article in which a lately talented financier, whose bank had failed, declared that the salvation of the human race depended on an elastic currency. When he concluded, he looked expectantly at the Mate. That large marine vertebrate continued to search the zenith with the earnestness of a zoologist looking for a flock of angels. Captain Moses waited hopefully, knowing from experience that in this attitude Mr. Bowsun often gave birth to a great clear thought.

Slowly the Mate brought his eyes back to earth at last, with a visible effort as of one unscrewing something with main strength. "I wonder," said he, "how long it'd take that feller to get somethin' real off his mind. That ain't a bad idee, though, that there elastic currency—a sort of money, near as I can make out, that can be in our own pants' pockets and in the other feller's at the same time. That feller ought to build a ship that could be in two ports to once. Take my adwice, Cap'n Moses, take my adwice, and don't waste time readin' them sort o' yarns. Them bankers knows even less than them newspapers, and them newspapers knows even less than them bankers. And that," said Mr. Bowsun pausing to reflect long and deeply, "seems almost unpossible, too. But it's so. And the only one as knows less nor both of 'em is the Guv'ment."

Captain Moses sidled off. Mr. Bowsun was prone to become discursive on the subject of the Government. Though he based his reasoning less on wide study than on his personal recollection of an injustice once perpetrated by a constable, he had built up a complete political philosophy on it.

Despite the united thought of newspapers, financiers, governments and the captain of the *Flying Squid*, the financial stringency and the schooner continued in *statu quo*. The commander discharged the crew and spent most of his time ashore, searching vainly for a non-existent something that a non-existent somebody might wish to send to a non-existent somewhere. Mr. Bowsun, left aboard, and unable to distract his mind by teaching sailors the way they should go, devoted much thought to Henry. He had daily inspirations as to ship's work. He discovered two tasks where only one had been before. All day long he surrounded Henry with tender solicitude, undeterred by the fact that he was openly ungrateful.

Mr. Bowsun's paternal care was the more distasteful because Henry had laid in a stock of fishing-tackle, in order, as he explained in an incautious moment to Mr. Bowsun, to pass the time away. It harrowed him that Mr. Bowsun relieved him so entirely of the necessity. He lowered his lines surreptitiously, only to find them strangely missing when he went to inspect them. He could not forbear uttering a rebuke.

"Fishin'," said Mr. Bowsun thoughtfully, taking hold of Henry's ear, "fishin' is cruel, Henery, cruel. You don't ketch no fish and you mess up the deck with bait. It's cruel."

"You're awful kind-hearted all at once!" squealed Henry. "How about bein' cruel to me?"

"Ah, Henery," replied Mr. Bowsun with a kindly smile, "that's different. Nobody as has your interests at heart should be afraid of any amount of croolty to make a man out o' you. A nice thing you'd grow up to be," continued he, feeling absent-mindedly for Henry's other ear, "if we didn't bring you up right. Lord, lord! what's a ear compared with a good charikter—or even a dozen ears!"

"Maybe," said Henry viciously, as he fled, "if they was ears like yours, that looks like fenders! But you leave mine alone!"

The incident made excessive tension in an already strained situation, and it was a real relief to Mr. Bowsun when Captain Moses came on board. In the midst of his immediately subsequent sufferings, Henry comforted himself slightly with the reflection that it was two against one, and when his course of instruction in discipline was finished, he fled below to plan darkly.

At first his offended thoughts revolved only vast and tragic vengeances, such as had been wreaked by his most pleasing heroes amid the applause of nations; but his cooler mind remembered that he had to consider not only the deserts of Captain Moses and Bill Bowsun, but the important interests of another person, that person being named Henry Moses.

These considerations brought a nobler purpose in their train. He would slip away without a word of farewell, vanish without a word of reproach. His heart almost lost its bitterness when he pictured the awakening, upbraiding consciences of the erring men. He thought, with something akin to a great compassion, how they would yield to horror when they missed him in the morning, and how passionately their grief would increase when they found that they had to get their own breakfast.

Henry had a stern temperament; yet he felt an unwonted tenderness for the two mariners, sleeping in calm unconsciousness of the blow that was about to fall. "Snore away! Snore away!" he muttered, as he tiptoed around, gathering his possessions. "Snore away! You'll snore different when you wake up!"

It did not require many minutes for him to pack. Henry was of a large reasonableness as to the requirements of the toilet. A scarlet necktie, a shirt, a comb and four of his latest learner's hand-books on piracy sufficed him. Light in baggage and mind he crept to the deck and gained the wharf. He paused just long enough to shake a fist at the schooner. Then the form of a dauntless youth, evidently one accustomed to danger and privation, might have been seen swinging from the deserted waterside toward the beating heart of the great city.

II

ON THE third evening thereafter, the form of a youth, evidently one who had been through dangers and privations, might have been seen wandering at random through the beating heart of the great city. Henry Moses had found the great city to be only a *Flying Squid* on a large and dirty scale, full of Bill Bowsuns, harboring an invincible ignorance and an obstinate animosity against talent. He had offered his services in almost every branch of human endeavor, and they had been declined with almost breathless haste. The only thing for which the beating heart of the city beat at all warmly was his money.

Henry's eye, gazing misanthropically at the abodes of avarice, was arrested by a brilliantly lighted entrance into which many people were crowding. On a placard alongside he saw the words "Admission Free." He made his way in at once, without troubling himself to scan the less important remarks that followed, announcing that Miss Alma Grool would deliver an address on the "Wrongs of Civilization."

Miss Alma Grool was a devoted righter of wrongs. She was an anti-militarist, a dress-reformer, an anti-vivisectionist, a prohibitionist, a mothers' helper, an anti-cremationist, a hydropath, an Ibsenist, a Socialist, an anti-X-rayist and a vegetarian. She upheld the Baconian theory of Shakespeare and the righteousness of a tax on dogs. She was a spiritualist and a spelling reformer. She opposed the germ theory of disease and the nude in art.

Miss Grool was a flattish lady. Except in breadth and thickness, her tall form was a convincing refutation of the geometrical maxim that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. She was so entirely modern that she referred to last year as the superstitious past. She always carried an umbrella.

As in all other professions, the financial stringency had caused a business depression in the righting of wrongs. Persons who had been lavishing money cheerfully to enable her to fight race-suicide or vaccination discovered suddenly that in finance "investing" and "divesting" are synonymous terms. Miss Grool found herself forced to add some new wrongs to her repertoire, and her lecture on the "Wrongs of Civilization" was to launch them. Her placard, which stated that admission was free, did not mention that a collection would be taken up inside after the lecture. Many previous experiences had told her that persons who have wrongs are willing to pay attention, but not money.

Henry was incensed when he discovered what the free admission admitted him to. His first just impulse was to walk out. His second impulse was to take a nap.

A shuffling of feet awakened him from a gratifying dream of Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun sobbing bitterly in each other's arms on the lonely deck of the *Flying Squid*.

He perceived without regret that he had slumbered throughout the entire lecture and that the sordid audience was hurrying to escape the collection-box. But Miss Grool had posted collectors at all the exits.

Henry Moses was entirely free from the weakness of liberality. He observed that the collectors were large and disquietingly successful. Glancing around him with the keen eye of the trained navigator, he spied a neglected side-door, hurried through it and discovered too late that it led into a room full of people.

Before he could retreat, he found himself face to face with Miss Alma Grool herself, holding a levee of admirers and fellow-righters. Miss Grool pounced on all strangers who ventured within pouncing distance, and her pouncing distance was kangarooian. She pounced on Henry.

During the next ten minutes he was mentally hove to in a conversational fog from which he emerged to hear his own voice recounting to Miss Grool the sad history of his life. It was not a true history, but it was very interesting. Henry never had read Byron, but he could have done so with the instant appreciation of a kindred soul. He poured forth a simple, artless tale of great wrongs on the seven seas that evoked gratified grief from Miss Grool and her colleagues.

"Poor boy!" said Miss Grool. "I will take up your case! Just let me have the names of the villains!"

Henry's prudence bitted the champing jaws of his Pegasus. The names of the *Flying Squid* and her commanders were his Secrets of State. He created a captain and mate instantly, and invented a steamship to fit his story, adding hastily that the vessel had sailed to Lisbon.

"Let 'em go!" said he magnanimously. "All I want is to earn a honest living."

"Earning a living is ignoble," pronounced an advanced disciple with baggy trousers and a tightly buttoned frock coat. "Mankind should work, not for a gross living, but an ideal."

"I got to eat," said Henry briefly.

"Earthling!" sighed a fat lady in a green dress trimmed with pink.

Miss Grool raised her hand. "Come to my hearth," said she. "Alma Grool will be your friend."

She hurried Henry to her hearth, which was a hearth-less flat, and as soon as she had him safe she produced pen and paper and declared herself ready. Henry gazed at her unsympathetically.

"I—we—can make a splendid series of articles about the wrongs of sailors," said Miss Grool persuasively. "They would advert—" Miss Grool coughed, "help to reform the ship business. Think of the good you will do!"

Henry's face assumed the cold suspicion of a codfish examining a poorly baited hook and expressed decided disapprobation. Miss Grool, accustomed to angling for philanthropists, much warier fish than codfish, hastily put a new bait on. "There will be some money in it," she hinted.

"I don't want to get in no trouble," said Henry. "I don't want my name to get out, nor I don't want to give the names of the captains and ships that I had trouble with. They might try to get me back, because I run away and so I'm what they call a deserter, at sea."

Miss Grool had not felt the least desire to destroy Henry's value as an asset by giving his name to a world of predatory reporters. She intended to monopolize the wrongs of sailors herself. She assented graciously to the young mariner's conditions.

The newspapers viewed Miss Grool as a precious utility. They used her impartially as a subject for attack and cartoon, or as a valued contributor, according to the fitful fever of their circulation. Her offer of a series of articles about the wrongs of sailors was seized eagerly by a newspaper that had the largest circulation on earth, but was hard beset by others that had it also.

When Henry saw the first article, illustrated with intrepid fancy and crowned with volcanic ranges of head-line type, his artistic soul responded to the call. He thrilled Miss Grool with tales of cruelty and crime. Vengeance inspired him where imagination faltered; and though he invented ever new characters and ships, he impressed on each of his sea-villains some noteworthy and treasured characteristic of Captain Julius Moses or Mr. William Bowsun.

III

THOSE two, ignorant of treachery, had spent harrowing days seeking the lost. They searched public institutions, not neglecting even an old ladies' home and the colored orphan asylum, while Mr. Bowsun showed especial enthusiasm about madhouses. Finally, in an ill-starred moment, they had offered rewards in all the papers, and thereafter their lives were blighted, day and night, by the clamorous arrival of small boys, dragged to the *Flying Squid* by hopeful captors, who insisted indignantly on being paid for their trouble, while the furious youths expressed themselves in terse, pointed words.

After five long days full of trouble they rested on the *Flying Squid* during a blessed interval that was unbroken, temporarily, by the arrival of new boys. Captain Moses, idly scanning a newspaper, spoke pathetically of Henry, calling to mind many shining qualities that he had overlooked in the days of the past. Even Mr. Bowsun stifled within himself the still, small voice of candor, and ventured on the cautious statement that Henry probably meant well.

Suddenly Captain Moses stared hard at a headline. His mouth opened. "Bill!" said he, and gulped. "Bill! Listen to this! Here's something about ships. It's written by a chap, no—I guess it's a she—named Grool, and he—she says that the facts are from a young sailor. It's about cruelty at sea."

"Rubbish!" growled Mr. Bowsun. "What does people as write and print know about the sea?"

"Yes, but," said Captain Moses, "hear this!" His voice rose passionately as he read a few paragraphs that had a strange effect on Mr. Bowsun. "It's a lie!" roared he. "Let me see that there paper!"

"It don't mention your name," answered Captain Moses.

"You let me see!" bellowed Mr. Bowsun.

Captain Moses had been reading some succeeding lines, and seemed suddenly reluctant. Mr. Bowsun snatched the paper and plodded slowly down the column. "Why, here's something about you, too!" he remarked. Ignoring his superior's outstretched hand, he read with careful clearness: "The cap-tain of the schoo-ner was a lit-tle man with a small brown beard and he spent most of his time—keep-ing his hair combed and his—beard nice—and—trim. He talked soft—and low, but he was a crim-in-al at heart. His—mate——"

Mr. Bowsun stopped reading aloud and tried to peruse the rest in modest silence. Captain Moses seized the paper and continued with something faintly like satisfaction: "—was just the opposite in all except wickedness. He used to pull sailors' ears out by the roots. He was very ignorant, and very big and dirty!"

Captain Moses looked up and said lightly: "That's you, Bill!"

"What makes ye think that?" demanded Mr. Bowsun.

Captain Moses coughed. He leaped hastily to the next paragraph, reading a description of the vessel that fitted the *Flying Squid* too well to be denied. The two looked at each other and said with one voice: "Henry!"

Half an hour later they were in the office of the newspaper, striving to express themselves in fitting terms. A smiling editor listened with kindly toleration. "I don't know who you are," he comforted them, when they had exhausted themselves temporarily, "but I don't see what grievance you have. We didn't mention any names, you know. Now, for instance, did you ever pull a sailor's ear out?"

"No!" roared Mr. Bowsun. "It's a lie!"

"Or did you knock a man overboard with a punch from a binnacle or a hawse-pipe or whatever it was?" continued the affable editor.

"No! It's all lies, lies from beginning to end!" declared Captain Moses, breathing hard.

"There you are, then!" said the journalist. "If you want to claim that this article means you, why just say so, and we'll send for the police and you can settle it in court. And if you didn't do these things, like making a poor boy polish brass-work till he got bright green all over from blood-poisoning, why, then, this article doesn't mean you, and I wouldn't let it annoy me, you know."

"Annoy us!" gasped Mr. Bowsun. "Don't you tell me I'm annoyed! Annoyed! Why, that's a insult!"

"Come away, Bill, come away," exclaimed Captain Moses with somber dignity. "We'll go to this Miss Gruel and get hold of Henry."

"That's right, gentlemen," said the editor with sudden enthusiasm. "You see her, and if you get away with her, you let me have your pictures and I'll print 'em on the first page!"

Captain Moses and Bill Bowsun earnestly implored the editor to make a certain journey. Then they tracked Miss Grool's address to its lair in the directory and bearded her in her den. As they entered the den they felt sure that they spied the manly form of Henry Moses vanishing into a rear den; but all their indignation was unavailing to extract anything from Miss Grool. At last Mr. Bowsun's precariously sustained patience gave way and he burst forth wistfully, "I wish you was a man!"

"Don't let that interfere!" replied Miss Grool politely. "I'm equal to any man."

"Equal to any man!" repeated Mr. Bowsun, backing to the door as if he were choking for fresh air; "equal to any man! Miss Porridge, leastwise Puddin', you're equal to a whole ship's crew o' men, and them the most aggrawatin' kind!"

As the door closed behind them, their alert ears heard a faint snigger that was the unmistakable snigger of Henry Moses.

"Wait till we get hold on him!" announced Bill Bowsun. "Let's hurry to the police!"

"And get our names in the paper?" inquired Captain Moses. "It'd ruin us, and what could we do? Let him alone for a while and we'll think up something. For the time being, he's safe, that's one comfort. I've been real worried about Henry, Bill."

"Me, I'm worried a whole lot more about him now," responded Mr. Bowsun malevolently.

IV

DURING the next days Henry's fancy made increasing flights, and the articles pictured so many utterly lost villains, with so many distinctly personal attributes of Captain Moses and his Mate, that self-respect forbade them from reading newspapers in each other's presence.

In privacy, however, they read every line of Miss Grool's articles until at last Mr. Bowsun began to have grave fears that he would lose his mind.

About this time, Henry, emerging from the apartment house for recreation after his literary labors, dodged back only just in time to escape the grip of two immense hairy hands.

He escaped to the flat and peered from the window to see the immense and hairy owner of the hands waiting patiently below, with his eyes fixed on the door. An hour later the avenging Mr. Bowsun was waiting still. Dusk came, and Mr. Bowsun was immovable, a fixed part of the municipal scenery, waiting with the implacable patience of a heart that treasures up a wrong.

Henry's mind, dwelling on the waiting avenger, lacked its wonted spring that evening when Miss Grool sat down to continue the sad story of his young life. His flow of invention ceased spasmodically. He refrained from telling her about the vigil below; but she discovered it herself when she happened to glance from the window.

"That's the man that came to see me with another man—a little one," she said. "I wonder what he's doing here."

"He's been hangin' around for a couple of days," said Henry, instantly awake to opportunity. "Maybe he's mad on account of the things you're writing."

"They were angry, those two," reflected Miss Grool aloud. "That's true—so angry they didn't even tell me who they were. I wonder whether he means harm."

Henry shook his head gravely, as one who does not know but fears the worst. Miss Grool was not a timid creature; but when an hour passed and Mr. Bowsun still remained at anchor in the offing, she called up the police on the telephone.

Mr. Bowsun's first intimation of disturbance came from behind, in the form of a club applied smartly to his legs with the injunction to move on. Mr. Bowsun obeyed instantly, but too literally. He moved on the policeman.

The city census was in imminent danger of being reduced by one, when a second policeman arrived. Mr. Bowsun explained hurriedly that it would take at least three to arrest him. Bill Bowsun's mental arithmetic was poor. It required five; and each of the five thought that the prisoner was a freak of nature with oaken mauls for hands.

Bill Bowsun himself needed repairs, but his wrath was so much greater than his pain that he succeeded in climbing half way over the desk in the station house in his effort to speak to the police lieutenant when that official demanded his name. Altogether he behaved so impatiently that at last the entire police garrison became vexed and deposited him in a cell without insisting on the ceremony of recording his pedigree.

A night in cool solitude restored Mr. Bowsun's mind to its normal lucidity. When he was haled forth in the morning, he gave his name as John Smith, landsman, a deep device to keep his identity secret from a prying Government. Later in the tragic day he had to listen to a police court justice who spoke with extraordinary freedom; and then, outwardly a dead calm but inwardly a hurricane, he hoisted from his hold a roll of cherished bills and paid a fine that left him financially dismasted.

Captain Moses had spent a grievous night searching for his Mate and partner. It was a moral mustard on the raw surface of his anguish when he beheld Mr. Bowsun's dismantled condition and heard his story. United by a great passion, they conversed brokenly of the great disasters that they longed to purvey to Miss Grool and to Henry.

It was a merciful thought of an otherwise thoughtless Providence that sent them something to change their train of reflections. Providence's agent had a dark, richly-colored face of mahogany, and bow legs. In hull he was modeled like Mr. Bowsun, with a broad, bluff bow and immense beam and counter. But he had a merry eye that rolled with gleeful recollection of jokes past and with gleeful anticipation of jokes to come, whereas Mr. Bowsun's fine eye looked fixedly into gloom.

"Ship ahoy!" roared he, rolling to the gangway. "This is the A. B. Hawser, Master, retired. Tumble up, ye lubbers, tumble up!"

Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun tumbled up and led their guest into the cabin where Captain Moses produced a bottle and glasses. "No, thank you," said Hawser, Master, firmly. He held out his glass and looked at it with surprise when he found that Captain Moses had poured liquor into it. With a sigh he drank it off, and settled himself to listen while Captain Moses and Mr. Bowsun told him the tale of their griefs.

At certain passionate scenes he shook with feeling that he tried to suppress. He shook for a decidedly long period after they had concluded.

"Well, well!" said he. "Funny how—no, never mind. Drop Henry for a while, and let's get down to business. I've got a cargo for ye, shipmates—not common cargo, either. Freight and passengers, and me—I'll go along. I'm going along as a matter of business, but," and he shook again and slapped Bill Bowsun joyfully on the back, "ding me! I'd go along even if I had to pay my passage, just to—to see something."

"What's the something?" inquired Mr. Bowsun, viewing Mr. Hawser pessimistically.

"Your face, Bill, when you see the passengers!" roared Mr. Hawser, slapping Mr Bowsun's back with a stroke like a deck-hatch falling.

The Mate edged away. He and Captain Moses looked questioningly at their merry friend, retired. He, however, seemed suddenly far away. He was sitting in deep reflection, his eye fixed thoughtfully at his empty glass.

Captain Moses reached for the bottle.

"Fill it up good, Cap'n Moses," said Mr. Bowsun with solicitous hospitality, "fill it up good, so's Cap'n Hawser won't have to pass his glass so of'en."

Captain Hawser drained the glass. He smacked his lips. He drew forth a handkerchief not quite half as large as a mainsail and wiped his mouth. Then a sudden thought appeared to strike him. "What did you mean by that remark just now, Bill?" he demanded.

"Mean?" asked Bill. "Mean? Why, Cap'n Hawser, I only meant to give ye rum as fast as you can drink it. Leastways," concluded Bill, warned by Captain Hawser's disapproving glance that something was wrong, "leastways, of course, not as fast as that! As fast as we could give it ye, don't ye see?"

"What Bill meant, Cap'n Hawser," interposed Captain Moses helpfully, "was that no matter how much rum you—no, he didn't mean that neither, of course! Here! Hold out your glass and I'll show you what he meant."

"No, thank ye!" answered Captain Hawser stubbornly. He held out his glass and cried "Hold! Enough!" at frequent intervals till the law of liquids prevented the glass from holding any more.

"Now," said he, after testing the liquor carefully, "now that Bill has explained what he meant by saying something that might have meant something different, I'll tell ye about this cargo and you can say if ye want it or not. But I guess you want it. Why, Cap'n Gaffers, that sails the *Cockatoo* steamer, he told me yesterday that freights was that scarce that he'd take a cargo of artesian wells if he could get it."

"The *Cockatoo*," said Bill, "don't look as if she could carry anything much heavier."

"Well," continued Captain Hawser, "the *Cockatoo* won't get this cargo, anyway. Now, these passengers, they're not common passengers. They're worse. Yes, sir, they're worse. They're the finest lot of assorted chandlery in the way of cranks that ever came together in any place excepting a lunatic asylum. Why, some of 'em, Bill, are worse cranks than even you! Each one of 'em believes in a different kind of crankery, all his own, and the only thing they ever managed to agree on was this trip.

"They're going down to the Antilles where the head-crank owns an island, and they're going to start a colony there and invite all the cranks that it'll hold to come down and live there when they've fixed things up. And they've hired me to fit 'em out and be a sort of a nurse to 'em till they get settled, and I'm hiring you to take the happy family and their stuff down there, Moses, old boy! The head-crank, he's got piles of money. It'll pay you well; but it's hustle, hustle, hustle, shipmates! Ship a crew, haul down the bay and anchor, and I'll be sending the freight all aboard by day after to-morrow."

Captain Moses nodded, brought pen and ink, and they drew up the papers. Then A. B. Hawser, Master, retired, looked long and earnestly at Bill Bowsun, slapped his back before Mr. Bowsun could dodge, and escaped to the deck.

V

THE days that followed were so full of labor that neither Captain or Mate of the *Flying Squid* had time to brood over the malicious articles that continued to flow from the brain of Henry Moses and the pen of Alma Grool; but whenever opportunity offered they cheered each other with gorgeous word-pictures of their intentions if they ever got hold of the erring youth.

At last the holds were filled with the provisions, clothing, implements, seeds, books, portable houses, typewriters and printing presses destined for the colony. "Now for them passengers," said Mr. Bowsun. "The sooner we get 'em aboard, the sooner we'll get rid on 'em again."

"That's not the right spirit, Bill," Captain Hawser rebuked him. "It's a bad spirit, and un-Christian. You won't get any improvement out of the v'yage if you look at it in that way, Bill. And I was hoping that the passengers would do you a lot of good. There's the lady I was telling you about, Bill, that eats everything raw. See what the *Flying Squid* would save if you and Cap'n Moses and the crew would only be willing to learn. You wouldn't have to carry a cook."

Mr. Bowsun grunted.

"And then there's the boss of the gang, Nutt, that's got a hundred thousand million dollars or so," continued Captain Hawser cheerily. "You make friends wuth him, Bill, and he'll never get tired telling you how fine it is to be poor. Take that man around, Moses, and introduce him to your crew, and they'll refuse to take any wages, see if they don't."

"Yes?" growled Bill. "Then why don't he give his money away?"

"Ah!" responded Captain Hawser. "There you go again! You know what I told you, Bill. He says money is such a curse that he wouldn't think of passing it on."

"Well," said Bill morosely, "let him stay away from me! If he don't, I'll curse him, and not with money, neither."

In this unsympathetic mood, Mr. Bowsun and Captain Moses paid only formal attention to the passengers when Captain Hawser brought them alongside in a tug about dusk. Their appearance justified Mr. Bowsun's gloomiest prognostications. They were only few in number: but they filled the *Flying Squid* with shrill sounds and obtrusive personality, and within five minutes they had succeeded in sitting or standing on every cable and rope that Mr. Bowsun's men were trying to haul.

He wiped his brow with his sleeve and rushed frantically at a lady in smoked glasses who was reposing in the middle of a loop of the main-sheet. "Scat, miss!" he yelled. "Sheer off the sheet, quick, or you'll be aloft!"

"Think of it!" he growled to Captain Hawser, who helped him pick her up and disentangle her barely in time to save her from a skyward trip, feet first. "I told her as plain as could be, and she just stood there, and never tried to move! And that there Nutt! Cap'n Hawser, I'll run aboard him if he don't go below! Listen to him, givin' orders as if he was the skipper!"

Captain Hawser beheld the signs of gathering epic grief in Mr. William Bowsun. With a skill that only chicken-breeders or pig-drovers could have appreciated justly, he gathered his flock and half drove, half led it, below.

"I've got 'em busy settling their belongings, Bill," he reported when he emerged. "Now you get all ready to sail. I got one more run to make ashore for some others that couldn't get ready before this, and I didn't have time to tell 'em the name of the ship or where she was, so I'll have to go and get 'em. We'll be aboard before turn of tide to-night, and the minute we come back you can start."

He reached his broad arm forth fondly and shook Bill from bow to maintop with an affectionate blow on the back.

"I'll eat on deck," said Bill to Captain Moses when the dinner call sounded. "And you'd better do the same."

"It wouldn't be polite to them down there," replied Captain Moses longingly.

"It'd be less polite to go down—leastways so far as I be concerned," announced Mr. Bowsun briefly. "That there Nutt——"

"All right, Bill, all right," answered Captain Moses. "I'll send your dinner up, and I'll eat with 'em—unless, unless, Bill," and he laid his hand in friendly pressure on the Mate's arm, "unless you should need me. You could send me word about five minutes after dinner's served, you know, Bill. I don't want you to have everything to attend to all alone."

"Oh, I won't need you," replied Bill, with a generosity that struck Captain Moses as hypocritical if not heartless. He sighed and pulled his little beard as he went below.

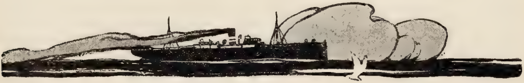
Left to himself, Mr. Bowsun exhorted his crew feverishly and had the *Flying Squid* ready for sea long before the lights of the returning tug came in sight.

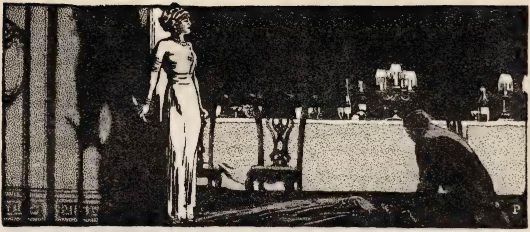
"Ship ahoy!" bellowed the voice of A. B. Hawser, Master, retired. "Lend a hand here!"

He tumbled on deck and rolled to Bill's side. "I want you to meet the passengers, Bill," said he. His arm swung fondly at Mr. Bowsun, but found only empty air, for his friend had side-stepped with unexpected agility. Mr. Hawser clutched him and dragged him to the side. "Here they are, Bill," he whispered, with a strange quiver in his voice. "Here they are!"

The light fell on a form that came over the side from the tug's deck. It was the form of a tall, flattish lady. Behind her, urged by strong arms, came a smaller form that showed signs of a sudden coyness and reluctance. "Don't faint, Bill, don't faint!" shouted Captain Hawser bursting into a glad roar. "Sudden joy sometimes acts that way!" He turned to the side and snatched the small form. "Welcome aboard the *Flying Squid!*" he said breathlessly. "Miss Grool, Mr. Bowsun. Mr. Bowsun, Mr. Henry Moses!"

But Mr. Bowsun was busy already with Mr. Henry Moses.





CAN A MAN BE TRUE?

by Winifred Graham

Author of "The Vision at the Savoy"

SYNOPSIS: Maldio, the progressive and beloved young ruler of the small European kingdom of Lambasa, is poisoned by Count Bistoff at the orders of Maldio's stepmother, Queen Horatia, so that her own son, the puppet Gisdel, may rule. Bistoff, secretly loyal to Maldio, only drugs him and later revives and rescues him from the tomb, along with Dugdale, an English secret agent, buried alive for claiming Maldio was not really dead. Maldio, demanding a respite from kingly cares before claiming his throne, goes to England and secretly marries Loti, the girl he loves, his identity being known only to her. Meanwhile Gisdel has become infatuated with Caroline de L'Isle, an actress, thereby enraging his mother. The Queen discovers the tomb is empty, suspects Bistoff and sends Zavair to summon him. Bistoff makes excuses. Zavair reports having seen Dugdale alive at Bistoff's home.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PALACE OF A THOUSAND FEARS

ZAVAIR had dealt the Queen a crushing blow, which momentarily scattered her senses. In low, confidential tones she gasped out trembling questions. Could he swear to the man? Did he feel completely convinced the face was Dugdale's and no other?

"You see," she added, "this means that Count Bistoff, whom I trusted implicitly, is a traitor. My reason can scarcely grasp such depths of perfidy. We can bear the animosity of foes, but when a friend turns to rend the hand which ever showed him kindness, then indeed the vengeance of heaven should fall on the vile Judas of to-day!"

Zavair thought of Horatia's many dark deeds. Long years of tyranny rose up in the mind of this man who knew of her secret cruelty. He could not wonder that a so-called friend should prove false. What had she ever done to win loyalty or affection? The Silent Brigade and their impassive Chief served the Queen in deadly fear. They were true, because to be otherwise meant death.

He answered the burning questions put to him in nervous accents. Yes, he could swear to what he had seen. And Count Bistoff's refusal to answer the royal summons spoke for itself. Undoubtedly the Court Physician was a traitor.

The distracted woman put both hands to her head. She felt as if her brain were bursting. "I must be left to think," she murmured. "You may withdraw, Zavair, but hold yourself in readiness to fulfil immediately any orders received within the next few hours. I must hold counsel with the King. Keep all your men together throughout the night, fully armed!"

"Yes, your Majesty."

The Queen held out her shaking hand, and, kneeling, Zavair touched it lightly with his lips. Rising, without another word, he silently retired, carrying in his heart the full knowledge of the deadly fear which assailed that stricken figure, bent with grief.

As the door closed, Horatia opened her desk and drew out a large portrait of Count Bistoff. She gazed fiercely at the speaking features, depicted with their most pleasing smile.

"Put not your trust in any child of man!" she muttered between clenched teeth. "No man is true, not even he who breathed devotion, who whispered flattery, outwardly swearing to fulfil my every wish and desire—even to the planning of Maldio's death! What can it all mean? If Dugdale lives, is it possible Maldio himself has been taken from the tomb and revived by Bistoff's skill?"

She looked wildly round the room, and her ears were intently alert to every sound. The gentle murmur of the evening breeze stirring the curtains appeared as the warning voice of phantom visitors. The Palace became haunted by a thousand fears. By some strange trick of fancy it developed into a mausoleum containing the spirits of Horatia's victims.

Not only Maldio and the English spy returned to convict the guilty woman of hideous atrocities; forms from the past, long-forgotten, tortured, blood-drenched faces materialized in the suffocating atmosphere. Horatia gasped for breath. The very jewels on her neck were heavy as the chains once binding the prisoners whose fate she had secretly decided. She turned deadly cold, then hot as fire, as she tried to steady her brain, to see clearly, but still the dreaded specters of her tortured fancy confronted her in the luxurious and familiar room.

"I shall go mad," she told herself, "if I stay here alone! I must have speech with Gisdel. He must know at once that Bistoff has failed us and that Dugdale lives. Possibly a serious situation may bring him to a better mind, and rouse the latent good in him. Sometimes the young see further than the old. He spoke of danger; he knew instinctively there was trouble ahead. In the hour of tribulation he will stand by his mother."

Comforting herself with this thought she hurried to Gisdel's room and knocked cautiously on the door. Receiving no answer, she shook the handle and, finding it locked against her, rapped loudly on the oak paneling. Once more she listened, but no movement within showed that the sleeper heard.

"He must be awake, but he is sulky because he especially asked me not to disturb him," she thought. "He little guesses all I have to tell."

Bending down, she spoke in a penetrating voice.

"Gisdel," she called, "Gisdel! Open the door. It is I, your mother. We are in danger! Come quickly!"

But the words were greeted by deaf ears—or else the room was empty. This thought flashed through the Queen's mind as she tried to force the lock. She had suspected he might be joining Mademoiselle de L'Isle after the theater, but as yet she had not realized the lateness of the hour.

As she flung the whole weight of her body against the strongly-fastened door, a servant appeared, summoned by the unusual commotion in the wide tapestry-decked corridor.

Horatia bade him fetch men to break open the door.

"I fear he is unwell. I can get no answer."

The servant hesitated, looking distinctly uncomfortable.

"Tell me," she added sharply, "has his Majesty left the Palace?"

The servant knew well what it meant to displease the Queen. He had little fear of Gisdel's wrath.

"Since I can but speak the truth," he answered humbly, "you have judged rightly, most gracious Queen. His Majesty drove away half an hour ago from a side entrance."

The hard line of Horatia's mouth might have been molded in iron as she listened to the words.

"Enough!" she said. "Go below and order my carriage immediately. If your words are correct, I shall not forget to reward you. Have no fear of the King's displeasure; you are under my protection."

A sigh of relief escaped the man as his tall figure vanished down the long corridor.

In a moment Horatia decided how to act. She would go herself and fetch Gisdel from Caroline de L'Isle's house. She would tell him that in his official capacity he was instantly required. She would also have a word with the brazen woman who was compassing her son's downfall.

Hurriedly the indignant and fear-stricken mother veiled her face in thickly patterned lace. The ample draperies of a magnificent cloak completely hid the Queen's ponderous figure, giving no indication of the bitter wo it harbored beneath dazzling folds.

With stately tread Horatia descended the wide staircase, her chin held high at a haughty angle, her fists clenched. She felt she was going forth to war, starting out to fight for her only son, loved wildly, despite his many faults. Her ladies-in-waiting watched with startled eyes the departure of the Queen on this errand of mystery. They guessed something unusual had occurred; they suspected she was about to follow King Gisdel.

As she reached the open door, one of the many attendants, in the gorgeous livery of Lambasa's royal house, stepped forward and handed Horatia a note on a gold salver. Instantly she saw it was in Bistoff's writing.

With trembling hands she broke the seal. For a moment she could not see the letters as they danced before her eyes.

The message had no formal opening or courteous ending, but the words were written clearly across the Count's stamped note-paper.

> This is to warn you that King Maldio lives, and will shortly return to claim his crown. He knows you plotted his death. Be advised and fly the country with your son, before the people rise up and tear you in pieces.
>
> Diarmid Bistoff.

No word of sympathy or regret; merely "Save yourself if you can—the end is at hand!"

The Queen tottered slightly, then, crushing the sheet in nervous fingers, moved forward like one dazed and entered the royal carriage.

The coachman whipped up his horses and drove away at full speed to the brightly illuminated residence where Mademoiselle de L'Isle entertained her birthday guests.

CHAPTER XXXI

CAROLINE'S KING

IN BUOYANT spirits King Gisdel sought the radiant star of the stage. He came into her presence with glowing eyes that silently spoke his appreciation of her beauty. Never had Caroline appeared more lovely than on this great birthday-night. Her exquisite figure showed off to perfection a shimmering gown created for her by the most celebrated dress-artist in Vienna. Her wonderfully molded neck and arms gleamed with jewels, while a tiara of gems crowned her masses of dark hair. Every movement expressed the grace which had made her famous as a dancer.

Gisdel, basking in the light of her charms, felt as if Caroline, and Caroline alone, comprised the whole world. His kingdom, his power, home ties and bonds of blood, were as nothing compared with this wonderful woman. Her magnetic personality dominated him with strong hypnotic force. He lived only to do her will. If she had demanded his whole fortune he felt he would have laid it at her feet. Never in the past had she held him in so powerful a spell. He was no longer master of his own actions. The magic of Caroline's smile bewitched him.

Her whispered words of thanks thrilled him to the core as she pointed to the diamond heart and emerald necklace showing up the pure tints of her naturally fair skin. Though her lips were rouged, she was otherwise guiltless of paint and powder, nature having endowed her with a magnificent complexion.

"You must let me present my guests," she murmured. "They are all terribly excited at the prospect of bowing the knee to your Majesty."

She spoke in softly seductive accents, but a very keen observer might have traced an underlying note of sarcasm in the murmured words.

"I am in your hands," answered Gisdel, devouring her with infatuated eyes. "To-night I wish to be as one of you. Pray let your guests know that all formality is waived. I am only 'Caroline's King.' As such I rule, or, rather, am ruled by her. To-morrow I shall again be the sovereign of Lambasa; this evening I am only myself."

These gracious words of condescension were noised abroad by Caroline's diplomatic tongue, and Gisdel was treated merely as a guest of distinction and not as a reigning monarch whose influence might well have sobered the revelries in store.

Many of those assembled at the gorgeous supper had already dined well, a fact revealed by their noisy merriment. The table was shaped like a horseshoe—for luck, Caroline declared.

Two large throne-like chairs had been placed at the head for the King and hostess, an archway of tall palms waving above these important figures, as if especially to distinguish them from the common fry. By each plate a double frame held, as a gift, a portrait of Caroline and Gisdel, the former in dancing dress, the latter in Coronation robes. At the back of the dainty folding case, the elaborate menu revealed its appetizing list.

In the center of the table a tall birthday-cake, resembling a wedding-cake in every particular, towered upwards in banks of snowy sugar. To the vast amusement of the guests, twenty colored candles burned their silent watch around the edifice, in representation, presumably, of Caroline's age. Well her intimates knew she was nearer thirty if the truth were told, and the whispered word passed from mouth to mouth: "A cunning trick to hoodwink the King. So she is adopting the pose of youth!"

To Gisdel the scene proved entrancing. The shouts of laughter, the jests hurled to and fro across the table, the atmosphere of Bohemian festivity, bewildered and enthralled. Merely to watch Caroline was a revelation. She remained in touch with all her guests, even far away at the end of the horseshoe. Her laughter rang through the room like rippling music. Her bright sallies flew like lightning, while the words whispered only for Gisdel's ear were strangely sweet and subtle.

"I am going to make a speech," she told him. "I mean to propose your health. This feast is really yours, and they will not be happy unless we have the King's toast."

Gisdel flushed pleasurably. Already the wine had mounted to his head, making him almost as noisy and demonstrative as the surrounding company.

"I dare say you think it is a very great thing to be a King," he replied, "but really I believe you people have a far better time. If you came to one of the State banquets at the Palace you would be bored to death. Never the sound of a laugh, and nobody speaks above a monotone. I assure you I sometimes feel inclined to go to sleep or yawn my head off. Of course it is all the fault of my mother. She insists upon retaining the old stiff régime; anything like levity would paralyze her with horror."

Caroline smiled sympathetically. "I often think of the Queen," she said, "and her futile efforts to banish me from Lambasa. But for my King, and his bold decree that I should be tolerated in the Capital, I might now be languishing in Paris, an exile from my native land. Ah, me! That would have been a loss for Lambasa!"

She acted a kind of mock despair before capping her words with a shout of laughter, spontaneous as the mirth of a child rushing out of school.

Gisdel pressed her hand under the table.

"You are like fire!" he whispered. "You set me in a flame! Are you a witch, Caroline? Your beauty torments me—I wish you were less beautiful! What is that large white ornament quivering on a wire at the top of the cake?"

He bent forward, screwing up his eyes, for he had always been short-sighted.

For a moment the hostess hesitated, then replied lightly:

"It is a moth to signify night, supposed to be hovering over the twenty candles which mark my age. A pretty idea—is it not? You see I am still something of a child."

Gisdel looked at her sharply with a sudden flash of intelligence.

"I believe," he said, "you meant the moth for me. If so, you were not far wrong. You know I have singed my wings already."

Caroline shook her head, and refilled his glass.

"It is time for the speeches," she said. "Now we shall be really merry—we shall swim in wine!"

She rose to her feet, and a burst of applause greeted the action.

"Ladies and gentlemen, fill your glasses!" she cried. "I rise to propose the toast of the King!"

A wild clapping of hands greeted the words. Gisdel heard the sound as in a dream; he was gazing in mad adoration at the vivacious and smiling speaker.

"King Gisdel," continued the silvery voice, "is with us to-night as a friend. He has come, privately, to prove that, despite his illustrious birth and the slavery of a high position, he is just a man at heart, ready to befriend a woman who dances for her bread."

Caroline's words were spoken with dramatic intensity. Her flashing eyes looked down on Gisdel, large, lustrous and captivating in their soft radiance—their half-hidden fire.

"Yes," she repeated, "it is as my champion he is here, and I am proud of his presence! I could repeat his generous deeds till daylight, but he would never forgive me—and certainly never honor us again with his presence."

A ripple of laughter broke the tension; the guests were glad that Caroline had turned to a lighter vein. "I should like," she added, "to make this feast an annual one—to meet here year after year, until my age-candles were too many to burn. But since the future is veiled, let us think only of the moment. Let us drink as if this draft were the very elixir of life. With warm hearts beating right loyally, we toast our most noble and beloved guest. King Gisdel, your admiring subjects wish you well. Long may you reign as monarch of this land! From the lips of all who taste to-night the wine from your royal cellars, I give this token of never-dying love and esteem."

She bent and boldly kissed Gisdel on the forehead.

The unexpected salute sent a rush of crimson to his beaming face, and simultaneously his startled eyes caught sight of a tall figure wrapped in a long cloak, appearing like a ghost at the far end of the room.

The waiters and guests thought the newcomer must be a late arrival bidden to the feast, but Gisdel instantly recognized the shaded cloak with its costly trimmings. Well he knew the face that was hid beneath those disguising folds of heavily patterned lace! In a moment he paled, and drew back confused.

The newcomer advanced slowly toward Caroline and the King.

Then, as the frantic applause died down and the glasses once more were lowered, Horatia drew aside her veil and stood glaring at Mademoiselle de L'Isle with a look of fierce hatred and scorn. Caroline caught her breath, but years of training on the stage and her ever-ready wit came instantly to her aid.

"The Queen!" she cried in a loud voice of triumph. "She has come to join us! Ladies and gentlemen—the health of the Queen!"

CHAPTER XXXII

"LIKE AN OX TO THE SLAUGHTER"

THE look on Queen Horatia's face as Mademoiselle de L'Isle spoke the daring words so paralyzed the assembly that they feared to raise their glasses and drink the toast. A sudden hush fell, as if indeed some spectral form from another world had appeared to strike terror in the hearts of the guests. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the Queen was cordially hated. Among Caroline's friends at the gaily decked table were some of the fiercest revolutionary spirits in Lambasa. For the King they felt nothing but contemptuous pity, but toward the Queen they bore a long-nursed and bitter grudge. At her door they laid the grievances of overtaxation and unjust rule. Well they knew that Maldio's reforms had been hotly contested by his stepmother, and in certain circles a growing suspicion as to the cause of his death was secretly rumored.

Those who realized Bistoff was on the side of Horatia's enemies concluded he had possibly discovered some foul play, and daily the feeling against the Queen grew more vindictive. Now this tyrannical woman, this proud partner of her late husband's throne, stood facing a female foe who had boldly appropriated the affections of the King.

The curious eyes at the table, watching Caroline and the uninvited intruder, grew large with wonder, dread and painful anticipation. The gay evening had changed suddenly to one of tension and dread. Tragedy lurked in the air, though Caroline's bold lips still smiled a satirical welcome to the Queen-Mother, who had sought to banish her forever from Lambasa.

The recent news had played havoc with Horatia's nerves. Her face was livid with fury; her eyes glowed red and bloodshot, like balls of fire. Her voice rose in the sudden hush, trembling with passion, revealing the frantic agitation which disturbed her mind.

"Gisdel," she said, ignoring Caroline and turning to her son, "I have come for you. You are required at the Palace on urgent business. Nothing but the gravest news would have brought me beneath the roof of that low and impudent creature!"

She indicated the dancer with a movement of her hand, still keeping her eyes fixed on Gisdel, as if he alone occupied the crowded room.

The stinging words of open insult were greeted with a murmur of disapproval, but only a streak of scarlet, suddenly visible on Caroline's delicately molded cheeks, revealed that she heard.

Gisdel set his lips. He felt he could have struck his mother on the mouth for her cruel taunt.

Here he was, the guest of the woman he loved, and the Queen, forgetting what she owed to her position, throwing aside all conventionality, had tracked him in a mad fit of jealousy to spoil his pleasure and revile Caroline openly before her friends. He never credited for one moment the plea of urgent business or grave news. That, of course, was a very transparent excuse for depriving him of Mademoiselle de L'Isle's society on this her birthday-night. Horatia had overstepped all limits, forcing herself upon this company to make him an open laughing-stock in the eyes of his subjects. He could picture their merriment if he rose and left at her command. "Tied to his mother's apron-strings!"—that was what they would say. And Caroline—how she would despise him should he fail to defend her from the Queen's spite!

He rose and addressed his mother in an angry tone, knowing instinctively that the wine gave him artificial courage.

"I must decline to be disturbed," he said grandly, "and I am surprised at this uncalled-for intrusion. Unless you apologize to my hostess for your abusive language, I will know the reason why. I am King, and, as such, I command you to retire, and to seek some way by which you can wipe out this offense against good taste! An insult to Mademoiselle de L'Isle is an insult to the Throne!"

The words were received by shouts of "Bravo!" bursting from the guests in unexpected unison.

Instantly they took the cue from the King and turned in uproarious disapproval upon the haughty figure of the royal peacebreaker. Some disrespectful utterances were hurled in Horatia's direction, and as she caught the evil mutterings her blood rose and her brain grew dizzy with its weight of passion.

"God help you, Gisdel," she cried, "if you stand by that woman and let me go alone! You are lost forever—you have courted your own downfall. I give up the game; I leave you to your fate; I, your mother, must hand you over to these devils who hold you in their clutches. You think you are surrounded with friends! Poor duped fool, you do not see the gates of hell closing upon you!"

Caroline winced at the words and, stretching out protesting hands, swayed as if about to fall. But the action was merely the subtle movement of a dancer, who could make her pliable body respond at will to her theatrical desires. Gisdel put his arm about her, believing that by its support she was snatched from the borderland of insensibility.

Then she spoke, and her marvelous voice, clear, melodious, intense, startled the Queen into a fresh realization of the actress's magnetic power.

"We are devils!" she cried, her eyes sweeping the long table with a look that appeared to comprise individually each man and woman present. "The Queen has said it, and the Queen can not lie. Perhaps that is why she has joined us this evening. It is a suitable abode for one whose red crimes are the talk of Europe and the scandal of our land!"

The terrible words turned Gisdel cold. Suddenly he feared for his mother. His arms fell to his side as he flashed a look of anger at the woman who dared to throw down the gauntlet in return and openly revile a royal personage in his presence. Horatia saw the swift change.

But the hostess, fired by much wine and intoxicated by success, had overstepped the mark and did not mean to spare her enemy.

"Yes," continued Caroline, "and if my love for our King has caused his mother pangs of jealous pain, it is as nothing to the untold agonies she has inflicted for years upon suffering humanity!"

The speaker hurled the words at Horatia and, leaving her throne-like chair, stood at the corner of the table within an inch of the Queen-Mother. As Gisdel watched these women face to face a horrible fear possessed him. Wildly he asked his conscience how the evening would end—the evening of revelry which he had planned with so much pleasure! He longed to move between them, and lead his mother away, but terror rooted him to the spot. He could not even speak; his tongue felt paralyzed and his lips were stiff and dry.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked the Queen, drawing her skirts aside as if the nearness of the dancer defiled her royal garments. "It is strange that a low-born gutter virago like yourself should be so intimately acquainted with the life history of one whose private affairs can not possibly have reached your ears. I hope these vile slanders will go far to show the King what he gains by honoring his inferiors and joining their drunken revels! No words of mine will be needed now to prove to him what you are. You have revealed your true self—you who trap the simple ones with your wiles and prey upon them like a human vampire!

"I saw the brazen embrace you gave him as I entered this atmosphere of vice. The kiss was uninvited by which you sullied the royal forehead. You, who talk of crimes to me, seek to wreck the King's manhood. With your fair speech you induced him to join this low company, who flatter openly and in secret seek to destroy their Sovereign. You, Caroline de L'Isle, snared my son; you lured him to this house of ruin, and he went after you like an ox to the slaughter. Let my final words sink deep into your heart, for they are Bible words, and fit your case: 'She hath cast down many wounded, yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death!'"

This last loudly uttered insult reached the far corners of the room, and the stinging words went home with cruel intensity, maddening the woman exposed to the calumny of the indignant Queen.

A wild, shrill laugh, an insane laugh of uncontrollable rage, broke from Caroline.

"Your final words," she shrieked, beside herself with passion, "to sink deeply into my heart, I give you in return, O Queen, something to sink into *your* heart—something equally bitter!"

With quick, agile hand, Mademoiselle de L'Isle snatched a knife from the table and plunged it to the hilt in Horatia's breast!

CHAPTER XXXIII

MALDIO LIVES!

WITH a groan of agony the Queen's heavy form sank to the ground. Caroline staggered back as if, for the moment, she hardly realized her deed. The startled assembly leaped to their feet and crowded round the fallen figure with varying expressions of loathing and disgust.

Gisdel pushed his way to his mother's side, wading in her blood. He bent down and raised her head. Two faint words came from her gasping lips, words he believed to be an illusion of the dying brain: "Maldio lives!"

As if by some strange witchcraft that last whispered acknowledgment came echoing through the open windows from the street below. The town criers were shouting exultantly the news, which, once rumored, spread like wildfire through the Capital: "*King Maldio rescued from the tomb! King Maldio to return! The royal vault empty! King Maldio yet lives!*"

The sight of the dead Queen and the cries of an excited mob in the thoroughfare which an hour since had been empty and deserted fired the revolutionary spirit of Caroline's assembled guests. The assassination and the red vision of Horatia's blood appeared to intoxicate them more violently than the recent champagne and cognac which flowed like water. The flushed faces grew vicious and menacing as they gathered round the dancer's royal victim, and a low hissing sound burst from a chorus of lips. A tall, warlike singer from the opera, with massive chest and bull-like neck, kicked the body with an oath, spitting on the blood-stained garments. He was a strong believer in the Queen's treachery to her stepson and dared not hope the amazing cries from the street could hold a grain of truth. In his loud, resonant voice he addressed the multitude:

"Revenge the murder of Maldio!" he cried. "Death to King Gisdel, her partner in crime!"

As the words broke on Gisdel's ears his very lips grew blue. Letting the Queen's head fall violently to the ground, he sprang from his kneeling position and took refuge behind Caroline, hearing the shout of approbation which greeted the murderous suggestion. In a moment those who had hailed him friend were thirsting for his blood. His chattering teeth and cowering attitude, as he clung for protection to Mademoiselle de L'Isle's skirts, filled their dazed minds with contempt and loathing.

"Save me! Caroline—save me!" he whispered, so softly that she alone could hear the plea.

Quickly she looked from the livid face of the Queen's corpse to the sullen, glowering eyes of her guests. She knew only too well the fury in their hearts, the fierce hatred they bore the dead woman, and the pitiless scorn in which they held her worthless son.

"One thing at a time," replied Mademoiselle de L'Isle in her wonderful voice, which vibrated now with passionate emotion. "Remove this vile woman who insulted me! Hurl her body into the courtyard! It shall not contaminate these walls!"

She pointed to a distant window opening to a balcony.

The men, advancing upon the King, were quick to obey her command. In a moment they crowded round Horatia, roughly raising the body and bearing it away down the long room, followed by a throng of women who moved unsteadily. Crowding to the window, they pressed forward to see this further outrage to the dead Queen.

"Your chance!" whispered Caroline, edging Gisdel to a small side door hung with heavy strings of beads. "Hide in the hall cupboard behind the coats—you know where I mean! Quick!—they are mad for blood!"

Gisdel knew the door well; it was papered over and flush with the wall. He took one wild, terrified glance at the backs of his enemies, hearing Horatia fall with a thud upon the stone path below. Then, sick and half stunned, he flew for his life, creeping behind a long sable cloak of Caroline's in the far corner of the dark recess. Shaking with fear he sank to the ground in a huddled heap, giving himself up for lost. He could hear his would-be assassins, now maddened by drink and the lust of blood, rushing from room to room to find the missing King. Caroline, unable to control this first outbreak of revolution roused into action by her deed, gave ready permission for the house to be searched, sure in her heart they would not discover King Gisdel's hiding-place. Afraid to thwart their wild desires, she joined in the man-hunt, pretending to lend her aid.

"He must be near!" she declared hotly. "The hall door is bolted, so he can not have really escaped. He slipped away when you were obeying my commands. He probably ran up-stairs. I was looking at the balcony —I should have guarded him better."

It was clear the intoxicated crew intended searching every nook and corner. They peered into recesses, opened cupboards, crept beneath sofas and behind curtains. As each effort proved unavailing they grew exasperated. Some ransacked the salon, shaking out the delicate draperies lest they conceal the shivering King. Others mounted to the rose-colored bedchambers, dress-closets and bathrooms. Even the box-room was fully investigated, and the large trunks opened. At last the disappointed seekers turned on Caroline in sudden suspicion.

"You are untrue to the cause!" cried the accusing voice of the operatic Hercules. "You have enabled your lover to escape! You intentionally withheld from us the honor of killing a traitor, who sought to ruin the country Maldio loved! Gisdel, like his mother, plotted for the crown. Alive or dead, Maldio was their victim!"

Caroline shook her head.

"Have I not with my own hand stabbed the Queen to the heart?" she answered reproachfully. "I—and I alone claim to be the savior of Lambasa! This night I have stamped out the cruelest life which ever darkened a so-called civilized nation. Yet you say, 'Caroline is untrue!' See,"—stretching out her stained fingers—"I am red to the wrist in Horatia's blood! I have dragged the name of Gisdel through the mire! You think I love him; take these—and these—and these!"

She tore from neck, breast and arms the jewels the King had given her, hurling them dramatically at the feet of her accusers.

A shade of shame passed over the face of the singer who had voiced the general opinion.

"Pardon, great Caroline," he pleaded. "But, since you are so mighty, can not your wit rise to discover where the King hides?"

She pressed her fists to her brow, then, as if seized by a sudden thought, answered quickly:

"The cellars, of course! I had forgotten the cellars. He has taken refuge there. Go search below, and I will keep watch at the head of the stairs and call instantly should I hear him move above."

The whole company appeared dominated by Caroline's will. She insisted they should all descend to the vault-like cellars, where she knew they would grope about in semi-darkness, seeing the King in every shadow. As the last obeyed her wish and vanished underground, she turned with light step and flew to the secret door in the wall of the gaily papered hall. Touching the spring, she let in a ray of light. No sign of Gisdel till she whispered softly:

"Follow me—don't speak! Wrap yourself in my sable cloak."

As Gisdel obeyed, she ripped a frill of chiffon from her skirt and flung it over his head. Swift as lightning she unbolted the door leading to the street. The strange figure of the shivering monarch passed out,—and now the dawn was breaking; the Queen's carriage still stood at the door. Gisdel sprang into it, gasping the word "Home" to the amazed coachman, who recognized the King's voice beneath his disguise.

The gold domes of the Palace were tipped with rosy light. As Gisdel approached, he pulled himself together sufficiently to give another order.

"Stop at the sentry-box," he gasped. "The troops must be called out at once! The Queen has been murdered!"

The carriage drew up promptly. Gisdel did not wait for the footman to pen the door. In a moment he had sprung to the pavement. Then a strange sight greeted his bloodshot eyes. The Palace was surrounded by soldiers and the distant sound of firing reached his ear.

To his intense surprise, Bistoff rode up on a white charger, and the King saw he was fully armed.

"I regret that I have to place you under arrest, your Majesty," he said.

"What does it mean?" cried Gisdel, white to the lips. "Has every one gone mad? What does it mean, I say?"

"Civil war," answered the Court Physician, with his most military air, "and few are found loyal to their King."

"But you—you are on our side!" gasped the terrified youth.

"No," answered Diarmid Bistoff unhesitatingly, "I am on the side of Maldio—the—Thinker!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE OLD HOME

LOTI and Maldio had said their goodby to Red Tower, since the King could no longer blind his eyes to the call of duty. It became increasingly urgent for him to return to his country and restore peace.

Count Bistoff's letters and telegrams implored him to delay no longer, for the hour was drawing near when the nation must learn that their beloved Thinker still lived to serve Lambasa, given back from the tomb as if by a miracle.

When the fateful hour came to make a final decision and to answer Bistoff's entreaty by an arranged code, Maldio looked long and searchingly into the tear-dimmed eyes of his girl-wife.

"Loti," he said, "when I see your sorrowful face, and feel the force of my love for you, I am almost tempted to disappoint my deliverer and write to Bistoff that I will never set foot in Lambasa again! Sometimes I feel it would be better to remain dead and buried to all my subjects, and put aside the vainglory of a throne for peace, for love and quiet living. The temptation is strong—it comes upon me in weak moments, when I feel your arms about my neck."

Loti's heart stopped beating, and in that brief second of breathless joy she saw him given forever into her keeping, divorced from the burden of royalty—no longer a king, but merely the man and the husband, the one being who made the world for her a paradise of love. Then, horrified by the overwhelming flood of selfish desire, she stamped out that wild human longing, calling into power the brave spirit which ruled her true being. She knew she had everything to lose, yet her higher nature warned her that, if she failed to spur him to action, the coming years would be ever darkened by shadows of regret. Now her eyes were no longer dim. In the moment of victory they met his questioning gaze with the light of undaunted courage.

"If I were to hold you back," she whispered, "the day of remorse would follow. I should be ashamed to look my King in the face, knowing I had dragged him down, feeling he must regard me as the evil genius of his youth. You would not be the Maldio I trusted and adored, if you failed to fulfil the call of a great destiny. Though the parting is bitter—the very thought of it seems to me as a living death—I am ready for the blow. I shall wait—like the wife of a soldier, with my heart in the fray. I shall be ready to join you, in any capacity, the moment you bid me come. I only pray that as soon as it is possible you will let me be near you, even though our love must take the form of a secret intrigue. I would come as a servant in your Palace, sooner than live away from you in luxury!"

Her spirited words put fresh heart into her bridegroom, and from that moment he shook off his rising depression and warmed to the task before him.

Loti felt impressed by the businesslike manner in which the preparations for departure were made. Maldio's methods were those of speed and despatch. The very smallest detail in regard to giving up Red Tower he personally supervised, while all financial arrangements for her comfort and the support of her father were put into the hands of an able lawyer of irreproachable reputation.

"Of course I shall go back to Cambridge and do what I can to cheer my father," she said. "I suppose I had better tell him who Mr. Kingsley really is. It will be a great shock, of course, but I could not stand the strain of parrying questions and keeping up the fiction that my husband was some stranger unknown to him. Of course the world will soon ring with the wonderful story of your return, and father must know first. With his horror of morganatic marriages, I fear I shall have a difficult task in trying to reconcile him to the inevitable."

To make it easier for Loti, Maldio went straight to his desk, and wrote a long affectionate letter to the Professor, in which he swore to remain true to his English bride until the hour of death. He begged forgiveness for the deception played upon one who, as a parent, had every right to share their confidence, fully explaining the very exceptional circumstances. He begged Loti's father to regard this strange situation as sufficient excuse, and warned the old man that his daughter's return was but temporary, as he should make arrangements for her to live in Lambasa, directly he was sure of his crown.

The good-by in a London station seemed to the bride like some weird dream. Her brain could hardly grasp the fact that Maldio was returning to his high position. To her he was just the love of her youth, the simple, light-hearted, boyish companion of a blissful honeymoon. Those days at Yewton now appeared strangely distant and vision-like—with one dark blot, the awful night of a cruel bogus arrest. Despite her inward agony, she determined to show a smiling face to the last. Maldio should remember her as never anything but stanch, brave, unfaltering.

As he took her in his arms in the reserved compartment and pressed a last long kiss upon lips which quivered against her will, he whispered words of courage and the sure hope of future reunion.

Loti clung to him, her face pale, her heart steadfast in its resolve not to break down.

"Shall I come with you as far as the boat?" she whispered, a wild longing to put off the evil hour of parting prompting this sudden desire.

He shook his head. "No, darling, I could not endure the thought of your traveling back alone—it would make it harder for me. You have good time now to catch your train to Cambridge. You will feel happier in familiar surroundings; the old home will help you to bear up."

The doors of the train were already being closed, and Maldio watched the trembling figure alight. Wonderfully handsome he looked as he leaned through the open window for a last clasp of the dear hand, a last word, a last passionate meeting of languishing eyes.

"Good-by, my heart, my wife, my queen!" he murmured, as the engine's shrill whistle sounded the dread moment of departure.

Loti tried to answer, but she could not speak for the choking sensation in her throat. As Maldio vanished from view, Loti moved away, blinded by a rush of long-checked tears.

She felt glad his last words were—"my queen." They filled her with momentary comfort, holding some vague significance, for deep down in her heart lay the ever-unspoken dread, and haunting specter—of a future queen.

MARTHA'S excitement knew no bounds as she prepared for Mrs. Kingsley. Ample funds enabled her greatly to increase the comfort of College View.

Inwardly the Professor asked himself what this return meant, fearfully contemplating the early absence of the bridegroom. The mystery still held for him the taint of something underhand. Surely all these secret dealings must spell the future ruin of Loti's happiness! Had she possibly been tricked into some marriage which was no marriage at all? Was she the tool of some wealthy and unscrupulous deceiver? These questions were still uppermost in his mind as he waited on the platform to meet his daughter. So engrossed was he with these nervous speculations that the train came well into the station before he was aware of its approach. A moment later, Loti, beautifully dressed in an immaculate traveling costume and fashionable hat, sprang out with all her old childish energy and flung her arms round his neck.

"Father!" she cried. "Father!"

The feel of her warm cheek, the sight of her young beauty, warmed him like a sudden burst of sunshine. Yes, she was the same Loti who had vanished away so suddenly from the quiet little home, and a great wave of startling pleasure swept through the dazed mind of the troubled man. Every one had a smile and a word of welcome for the bride, and many were the hats raised in cheerful acknowledgment of her presence as she drove through the familiar streets. As if by mutual consent, both father and daughter avoided the subject of the wedding, speaking only of commonplace matters.

Martha, beaming and excited, waited at the door of College View. How small it looked, how pitifully small, compared to Red Tower! It seemed to have shrunk to minute proportions during Loti's absence. The Professor fumbled for the fare.

"I'll pay," she said, opening a gold chainbag which hung from her wrist. Inside lay some loose silver against the letter to his father-in-law, written by King Maldio of Lambasa.

CHAPTER XXXV

CONFESSION

THE Professor drew a chair forward, as if Loti were a stranger, and begged her to be seated.

"You must be tired after your journey," he said in a formal voice.

The girl's quick eyes noted the many additions supplied by thoughtful hands, in response to a written command from Red Tower that no expense should be spared in making the Professor comfortable. The shabby room appeared quite luxurious now, with its spotless new curtains, and recovered furniture.

As Loti poured out her father's tea, she wondered when he would speak of her marriage.

He took the cup from her with a murmured "Thank you," and added in the dreamy voice she knew so well:

"Are you happy, little girl? Why did you shut me out? Why did you try to break my heart?"

The low halting words revealed all the deep suffering inflicted by her silence. In a moment she was on her knees at his feet, holding both his hands in her warm clasp and gazing with all her soul into the tired, drawn face of the aged man.

"Oh, father," she whispered, "how cruel you must have thought me! But indeed I longed to tell you all! When you hear my story you will understand the grave issues and the many difficulties. Did you really think I left you for a stranger you had never seen? Did you believe it possible I could so soon forget Maldio?"

The Professor shivered. Had she taken leave of her senses?

"I hope you will not talk of Maldio. Do not dwell upon an old and impossible love-affair. Naturally I feel terribly anxious about your future. It looks as if your bridegroom were in some way ashamed of us, that he has not returned with you here. If he is under the impression you are not as well born as himself, let him come to me—let him come to me!"

The old man repeated the words with unexpected fervor. A weird, almost vindictive, light leaped into the usually mild eyes.

"Would to God I were his equal in birth!" said Loti, and her breath came quickly. "The Magnus family can boast a long line of ancestors, but that is not enough. You have always spoken in horror of royal blood, father, as if by some uncanny instinct you knew your daughter would one day become the morgantic wife of a king."

Professor Magnus started violently and his face grew ashen.

"I—I can't grasp what you mean, child. The wife of a king! How could that be? The only royal person you ever knew died in Lambasa some time before your wedding with Mr. Kingsley."

Loti put her arms round the agitated figure, and in quick, impressive tones poured forth her wonderful story. The letter, written unmistakably by Maldio, was eagerly spread out before the Professor's astonished gaze. In wondering silence he read the eloquent message sent to reassure him, the written promise that no other woman should ever share the life given back from the tomb.

For a while the old man appeared too overcome for speech as he caught Loti to his breast and held her there. Strained to his heart, she knew at least he forgave, however deeply he suffered. At last his voice returned. Very feebly he murmured:

"Has King Maldio actually sailed? Is it not possible I could have a word with him before he goes?"

Loti shook her head.

"He is on the sea now," she answered. "He could not delay."

"Can you write to the King?" asked her father eagerly. "I wish to send him a letter at once!"

His attitude was one of tension, as, leaning forward, he put the short, sharp question. His voice was no longer dreamy or absent-minded. It seemed as if his faculties were almost painfully roused. Loti had never seen him so alert or keenly interested in any subject unconnected with science.

"Oh, yes," she answered quickly, "we can write to him under cover of Count Bistoff's name. I know it will be a great relief to Maldio if you send him a kind word."

The Professor sat with his hands clasped tightly together. Now he seemed far away again, and Loti knew instinctively he had forgotten her presence. His lips were moving—he was muttering to himself words she tried to catch without avail.

"Father," said Loti, tapping him on the shoulder, "tell me your thoughts. Don't you feel well?"

He caught the note of fear in her voice.

"I was thinking," he said, "of the long ago. I forgot you were there, my child. I was living again in the old days before you were born, contemplating the long arm of coincidence—the strange, twisted paths of what men call Fate. I am trying to accustom myself to these startling truths. My Loti is allied to royal blood, the royal blood that in my eyes spells the ruin of happiness. But it is her own doing—she has chosen her destiny. God grant that, by a miracle, she may be saved from misery! As sure as I am speaking to you now, Lambasa will claim a queen, and Maldio will be forced to seek a partner for his throne."

The old man rose. No sympathy rang in his voice as he spoke the cruel prophecy. Instead, a look of triumph glowed in his eyes.

"Where are you going, father?" asked Loti, as he moved to the door.

"To my room. I must be alone. Don't follow me. I must be alone!"

Puzzled by the strangeness of his manner, Loti dared not follow.

Instead of going to his room, the Professor mounted slowly to a loft at the top of the house. He paused on the threshold and stood staring at trunks and lumber as if uncertain which way to turn. Then, with a little cry, he fell upon a long iron case and drew a bunch of keys from his pocket.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A LETTER TO KING MALDIO

THROUGH the narrow window of the loft the setting sun sent faint gold rays to shine upon the Professor's bent figure. The kindly light made a halo round the silver head and pierced the dark recesses of the mysterious iron box. To Loti it was familiar only from the outside, for she had never been allowed to open the lid on which the word "private" had been pasted long ago. Both Martha and her young mistress knew well the dusty iron case was precious in the eyes of its owner. Once when a small fire broke out on the ground floor of College View, before he gave a thought to his own safety, the Professor had hurried to the loft to make sure of rescuing the box which held his most valued papers. Now his eyes sought eagerly for a faded pile of legal-looking documents, fastened together with sealed tape. As he drew them forth, he bit his lips and stifled a sigh that was almost a sob. For a moment he held them up and read the words clearly written on the outside of the paper, yellow now with age:

> To be destroyed at my death, unless, ere I breathe my last, I change my present opinion and with my own lips tell Loti to read the contents.

"Always the fear," he muttered, "always the fear that in the end I would make it known! God help me if I am acting wrongly!"

He broke the tape and scattered the secret papers on the floor, sorting them with care and scanning each in turn with an expression of sorrowful disgust.

"Poor Loti!" he murmured, "poor injured child of destiny, how you must suffer in the future! God help you to bear your fate!"

With the look of a martyr going to the stake, the Professor, holding the papers to his heart, slowly left the shadowy room which had given up its strange treasure from the old iron box. The stealthy feet made no sound as they descended the stairs and entered the comfortable bedchamber with its wealth of roses clambering round the casement at the open window.

With knitted brow and set lips, he wrote with the neatness of a copy-book his letter to King Maldio. It was a long and intensely interesting epistle. More than once before its conclusion the Professor rose and paced the room. When eventually he signed his name with a fantastic flourish, he was shaking from head to foot as if seized by a fit of ague. Sealing the important document with his signet ring, he rang for Martha. She came quickly in answer to the summons.

"Send Miss Loti to me at once."

Martha paused, hoping he would make some further remark. But he kept his eyes on the blotting-paper. A little disappointed, she hurried away with the message.

As Loti came in with the light step of girlhood, the Professor realized that as yet she could not grasp the appalling position in which she was placed.

"I want to address this envelope to the King of Lambasa," he said. "I suppose it must go to him through Count Bistoff. Please tell me exactly what to write. I shall send it registered by to-night's post."

Loti looked doubtfully at the bulky package.

"I am enclosing a few papers of interest," replied the old man, and his voice sounded far away, while his mystic eyes gazed suddenly into space. "If he likes to throw them aside he must do so, and I think he will be the loser."

"Of course he would read anything you were kind enough to send," declared Loti. "I suppose—I may not see the letter?"

Professor Magnus pointed to the seal. "No," he replied in a voice of resolute determination. Inwardly he added to himself: "You shut me out of your confidence. This is retaliation. Besides, it is better for you not to know. Let Maldio act as he sees fit. Let Maldio be the judge."

"You—you have not said anything unkind to Maldio?" she whispered, pressing her soft cheek against her father's wrinkled face. "I can't imagine myself angry or vindictive towards him, even if he treated me cruelly, and that, I know, is impossible. He does so want to make me happy."

The Professor avoided Loti's eyes.

"Whatever occurs in the future," he said, "if you appeared happier than any woman living, I should still shudder to think you had condescended to become a morganatic wife. How would you feel if a royal wedding were announced, late in life perhaps, and you were forced to stand aside like a woman who has loved without the right to claim a husband's protection?"

He did not put the question harshly. It seemed rather that he spoke his fears aloud—that his hatred of thrones prompted the awful fancy.

Loti soothed him with cheering words. Maldio would be true—Maldio was so different from other men. He had tasted death, he was like gold tried by the fire. They need have no fear.

With bent head, drooping shoulders and unconvinced heart, the Professor walked slowly to the post-office. He would entrust the guarded missive to no hand but his own, and his air was even more preoccupied than usual, as he passed close to intimate friends without acknowledging their salutations.

When he returned, Professor Magnus, usually so careless with articles of value or money, locked away the registration-slip which chronicled the sending of that large, bulky envelope to Lambasa.

Though Loti tried throughout the evening to draw from him some hint of the letter's contents, she found him absolutely secretive on the subject.

That night, when she retired to the little white room of her girlhood, she realized the true meaning of the word "loneliness." Though golden memories crowded her brain, the absence of her bridegroom filled her heart with restless sorrow. Her feverish longing for a sight of his face, for the sound of his voice, became almost unbearable, and eventually salt tears washed her into a realm of heavy slumber.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ALL IN GOOD TIME

AS EVERY moment tookMaldio farther away from England, the old ties of home seemed calling more forcibly, and binding about his heart the cords of duty. Though his love for Loti was strong, he knew that, before her happiness or his own, he must consider the welfare of his country. Already those former schemes, by which he had sought to save the nation from the merciless methods of the past, were growing and expanding in his brain. He was truly "Maldio the Thinker," as he sat watching the restless movement of the sea, while he wove fresh ideas for the well-being of his people.

Now and again he almost fancied his wife stood at his side, murmuring words of approval. She knew all the ambitions of his heart; he could rely on her sympathy and trust to her silence.

His deeply meditative manner prevented those who strolled by from disturbing his reverie, though many curious eyes sought that silent figure with puzzled expressions and questioning thoughts. They knew the face instinctively, for at the time of Maldio's death, his portrait had appeared in various papers throughout Europe.

"The natives of Lambasa are strangely alike," remarked an especially interested observer. "That young man bears a strong resemblance to the late King. He may be related to the royal house, traveling incognito. I would not care to go to his country now, for some bad rioting is expected, and it looks as if Queen Horatia may be forced to retire into exile at any moment."

"Serve her right!" came the quick answer. "If all the scandal about her is true, the sooner she is hounded out, the better for everybody."

The boat was nearing the quay, and a sudden search for rugs and bags prevented further conversation. The friends who had discussed Maldio followed just behind him as the passengers walked single file across the gangway.

A crowd of newspaper boys accosted the arrivals as they emerged from the great steamer, shouting in piercing accents:

"Assassination of Queen Horatia, stabbed to death by a dancer! Tragedy of the King's supper-party! Revolutionary methods adopted! King Gisdel imprisoned! Rumors of King Maldio's return from the tomb! Amazing treachery at Court!"

Journals were eagerly purchased, and the situation in Lambasa dicussed on all sides. The two friends watched Maldio as he snatched a copy from the grimy hands of a yelling street arab and bent to scan the words.

"Did you see how white that young fellow turned?" they remarked, exchanging glances.

As soon as Maldio could escape from the rush at the custom-house, he hurried to a reserved seat in the express and devoured the contents of a pile of papers.

Graphically the scene of Gisdel's supper at the residence of Mademoiselle de L'Isle was described—the throwing of Horatia's body from the window, and the fortunate escape of the King, who would otherwise have shared his mother's death.

> At the time of going to press, the Revolutionaries, doubtless for purposes of their own, have spread abroad a wild report that Maldio the Thinker is yet alive. The coffin in which he was undoubtedly buried has been tampered with, and is now lying empty in the chancel of the Cathedral. Diarmid Bistoff, the Court Physician, has sworn that he himself rescued the young monarch alive on the eve of his burial, and has revealed a secret passage from the vault to his residence, the Villa Monastero. The people are mad with joy at the possibility of finding the rumor true, though it will never be fully credited until Maldio himself reappears, to quiet the kingdom and remount his throne.

As the King read the words eagerly, he heard a telegraph boy calling his name—"Kingsley." Hailing him, Maldio opened a message. Even before he learned its import, he caught the signature, "Bistoff."

> Meeting you at frontier with large military escort. Victorious party warmly desire your return and trust your Majesty will give the royal consent to a new scheme of government. The joy of the inhabitants at the news of your continued existence is indescribable. Your brother desires to abdicate, but is to be kept prisoner until your wishes are known. Dugdale has testified to the late Queen's treachery, and all her confidential guards and ministers are under arrest.

As the train started with a shrill whistle and sped through the Summer land stretching to the frontier of his kingdom, Maldio's thoughts were plunged in a new channel. The news of Queen Horatia's violent death turned him sick. Full well he knew she deserved her fate, yet he shuddered as he pictured her guilty fears when the truth dawned upon her that retribution was at hand.

"Poor Gisdel!" he said, "how she made him suffer through her very love and ambition for a favored son! At least he was innocent of plotting my death—Bistoff knows that—and I shall certainly force him to clear my step-brother's character."

The hours seemed long and tedious before the frontier was reached. Then a startling surprise awaited the travelers by the world-renowned express. Suddenly heads were thrust from the windows of every compartment, and eyes gazed curiously at the red-carpeted platform, lined with soldiers and decorated with palms and flags.

A gray-haired man in uniform, none other than the now famous Count Bistoff, advanced to the saloon carriage from which a boy-like figure sprang. With outstretched hands King Maldio greeted the loyal subject to whom he owed his life.

After a few brief words of welcome, Bistoff informed him that a dressing-room had been prepared in which the travel-stained Monarch could change from civilian garb into the resplendent uniform of the King's Own Regiment.

"I felt sure your Majesty would wish to be so attired for your triumphal entry into the Capital," said Bistoff, who himself guarded a case of priceless orders, in which lay the great diamond star that had been buried with Maldio's supposed corpse. "The town is being decked as if for a royal wedding. Even when your Majesty selects a queen, there will not be such rejoicing as now. The battle-cry has been suddenly silenced; it is the cry of life now—'Long live King Maldio!'"

The mention of a new queen, the wife of the reinstated King, sent a momentary shadow over Maldio's face.

"There will be no royal wedding," he answered, looking Diarmid fully in the eyes. "Already I am bound for life to a morganatic bride."

Bistoff started, and bit his lip with sudden vexation. Then, restraining his disappointment, he murmured softly:

"The King's will be done, but it is not in the blood of Maldio the Thinker to neglect his duty to the throne, to the State, to heaven itself! All in good time, your most gracious Majesty, all in good time."

The words sank like lead into Maldio's heart. Loti—his Loti—seemed like the dream-inhabitant of another world, far, so far away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A ROYAL PRISONER

MANY and deep were the emotions of the reinstated King as he made his triumphal entry into the Capital. Never had a human crowd cheered any living man as this mortal from the tomb. Their shouts of joy were almost as the roar of thunder, reaching the listening ears of Gisdel, imprisoned in the Palace and guarded by soldiers once his own subjects. In moody silence he sat picturing the scene. He had heard something from a talkative servant, who appeared to take a certain cruel delight in supplying the eagerly-asked-for information.

Gisdel drank in every word with feverish dread. He dared not think of his own punishment should those in power refuse to believe he was unacquainted with his mother's hideous deeds. What if he should have to suffer for her crimes? The terrifying verdict of Caroline's supper guests still rang in his ears—"Death to King Gisdel!"

He knew well the romantic temperament of Lambasa's populace. How they would worship the King whom they had followed weeping to the grave! Hearts must beat wildly that day with uncontrollable joy, and eyes be dimmed by tears of unspeakable gladness.

Maldio's return had checked the outbreak of revolution, putting an end to civil war. Through the length and breadth of the land a great wave of loyalty spread upon wings of rejoicing, while every country, learning the news, would marvel at the wonderful fortune and thrilling romance of this amazing resurrection.

Gisdel, remembering the stiff form in the coffin, shuddered to think he must face his brother again. He knew Maldio would have followed the career of failure, which alone marked the history of King Gisdel's short reign. He saw now to the full his own limitations, laying them at the door of his dead mother. She was responsible, and she alone, for the weakness of his policy, for his lack of understanding. She had kept him at her side like a baby, training him to selfish ease. Any width of view or effort at advancement met with her instant disapproval and speedy check. Gisdel was to be always under her thumb, the tool of her will, the child forced to obey her desires, however cruel, vain and meaningless.

As he passed lonely hours of contemplation, he looked deeply into his heart, examining the weak spots in his nature, marking without pity each lamentable error from early childhood to the present hour. He wondered if he would ever have a chance as a man, and not as a prince or reigning monarch, to redeem those years. Mademoiselle de L'Isle, in that moment of brutal assault upon the Queen, had taught him an unforgettable lesson. He saw still in his dreams the woman he had loved striking that deadly blow which had changed his blind infatuation to cold horror.

A feverish desire for freedom possessed the restless prisoner. Though he was permitted the comforts due his rank, the very idea of incarceration maddened him. If only he could get away and forever shake the dust of Lambasa from his feet!

When night fell he grew still more depressed and, hearing a strange booming sound, asked nervously what it might mean.

"Those are the salutes being let off in honor of his Majesty, King Maldio," replied the servant who waited upon Prince Gisdel at dinner. "The city is *en fête*."

The prisoner made no remark; he felt he could not bear to hear of the nation's rejoicing at his fall and Maldio's return.

Leaving his food untasted, Gisdel moved to a sofa and, flinging himself down, closed the eyes that ached from sleepless nights and fruitless vigils.

Just as he vaguely wondered whether by any painless process he could put an end to this weary existence, he heard the tramping of feet outside on the polished floor of the wide passage. He sprang up suddenly, paralyzed with fear. Possibly the soldiers were coming to remove him from these passably comfortable quarters to some prison cell. Perhaps the country had demanded his death and he was to be led out and shot under cover of the night. A thousand dread alarms seized his brain and, like a child afraid of the dark, he cowered away in the far corner of the room, covering his face with his hands.

The sentry outside moved away to enable the new-comers to unbolt the door. A flash of light from the brilliantly illuminated passage streamed in.

Gisdel, pulling himself together with a sudden sense of shame at his own cowardice, stepped forward unsteadily. As he did so, the door closed again and he found himself face to face and alone with the brother who had been lowered before his very eyes into the Cathedral vault—the brother Queen Horatia sought to destroy that Gisdel might reign.

Just for a moment the trembling prisoner turned cold with superstitious dread. He asked himself whether Maldio were really there, or whether this were merely a trick of his over-excited and troubled mind.

The tall, youthful figure in its handsome uniform, advanced and took Gisdel by the hand. The firm, friendly clasp suddenly fired the ex-king's frozen blood.

With a gasp of wonder he stammered a halting question: "Maldio, is it really you?"

No mistaking the warm human touch! There was nothing ghostly in Maldio's smile, so sweetly forgiving and full of unspoken encouragement.

"My poor Gisdel!" he said, drawing his stepbrother nearer.

The kindly tone and conciliatory manner affected Gisdel more deeply than all the harshness he had recently endured. Falling forward into Maldio's arms, his vitality ebbed away in the throes of an emotional faint.

Maldio picked up the puny form and laid it on the sofa.

"I will not summon help," he said. "Gisdel is despised enough already."

He tried to master his sense of contemptuous scorn, telling himself that the son Horatia loved was as much her victim as was the stepson she hated.

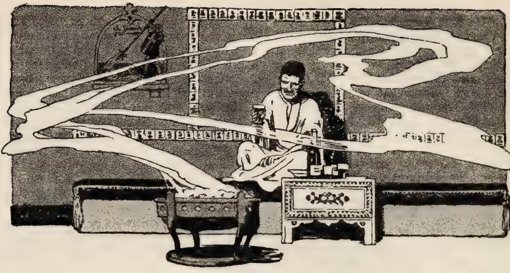
At last Gisdel opened his eyes.

"Let me abdicate," he murmured; "it is all I ask! In pity give me my freedom—say that I may go to some land of peace. I require no princely state, no hampering title. I never wanted to be king; now I do not even want to be a prince!"

Maldio raised the limp figure.

"Before either," he said a trifle sternly, "you must learn to be a man!"

TO BE CONCLUDED



He that Prepareth the Way

by Radoslav A. Tsanoff

THE Apostle was what the people were calling Father Boyan, the *comitaji* who had abandoned his little church and his fat deaconry in Vodena, to muddle the swineherds and charcoalmen with his notions of Human Rights and Freedom. A gospel of fire and sword he was preaching throughout Macedonia, and he had so far managed to eel his way through all the nets of the Turkish police. The standing reward of 1000 pounds, offered by the Sublime Porte for his head had been accumulating interest at the Ottoman Bank for the past twenty-five months. The rascal was well-nigh ubiquitous. Every one knew of him, but somehow or other nobody seemed to know him.

But news does leak out in spite of the best precautions. Somebody had blabbed, and Enver Pasha of Tetino had it on reliable information that the Macedono-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Committee was planning a Winter congress to be held some time in January for the purpose of deciding upon the advisability of an early Spring uprising. How it reached the ears of the police no one perhaps will ever know definitely; but Enver Pasha's entire machinery of sentries and spies was set in motion, and the thousand-fingered hand of the Ottoman police reached out ravenously for the master organizer, who was said to be preparing to begin the canvass of the Tetino district. Rumors had it even that he was hiding in the city that identical third week of November.

Late Sunday night, November 20th, Enver Pasha's chief assistant, Selim Effendi, otherwise known in Tetino as "The Tipsy Bloodhound," saw a suspicious-looking peasant attempting to cross the cordon of police that girdled the city. With the assistance of his *zaptieh*, Osman, Selim Effendi overpowered the peasant, tied and gagged him. A search of his clothes made Selim the possessor of the following message, hand-printed in good Bulgarian:

> To Robespierre in Poliany:—From the Den of Lions, Greeting! He that Prepareth the Way will gurgle over a cup of coffee in Stanko's Inn in Livady village on Tuesday afternoon next, to meet you for obvious reasons, with tidings from the Great on High.
>
> "Of a priest's cassock and a flowing beard,
> Nor Turk nor Moslem ever is afeared!"

To Selim Effendi the meaning was plain. What conceited idiot in Poliany had assumed the revolutionary pseudonym of "Robespierre" Selim knew little and cared less. "He that Prepareth the Way," however, could refer to but one person; and "If I could intercept *his* way," the Effendi thought, "I would be richer by exactly 1,000 pounds, and who knows but that Enver Pasha's own boots might be none too big for me!" The arrangements for the rendezvous were precision itself: Stanko's Inn, Livady, Tuesday afternoon, the Apostle's disguise being a priest's cassock and a flowing beard. So much was plain. Another thing equally plain was that Tetino did actually hold the Apostle.

Selim Effendi was thinking hard. Three courses were open to him. He might apprise Enver Pasha of his find—and be sent at once on a special mission to Salonica, while the Pasha turned Tetino upside down, captured the Apostle and kept the 1000 pounds. Or he might try to catch the Apostle himself, on his way to Dobridol; but this was uncertain, and would also involve the cooperation of more allies than Selim Effendi cared to share the money with. Or else "He that Prepareth the Way" could be trusted to see his way clear to Livady, and then find in Stanko's Inn a trap waiting for him, in the form, say, of a dealer in ikons, or else a merchant, or an American missionary. The choice was a minor matter.

To Selim's mind there was no question about the relative merits of the three courses. In order to follow the third course, however, it was necessary that the identity of "Robespierre" should be established, and the letter forwarded to its destination without exciting any suspicion. The captured peasant was stolidly stubborn during the first fifteen minutes of Selim Effendi's argumentation down in the cellar of the Tetino jail. But the Tipsy Bloodhound was a past master in the art of exquisite torture, and by the time the third beech-splinter had been hammered under the finger-nails of the captive's left hand, his right hand had traced upon a blood-stained scrap of paper the name of the Poliany schoolmaster. Having copied the letter, Selim carefully resealed it and, putting it into another envelope, directed it to the *onbashi* at Poliany, with instructions that it be left secretly on Dascal Zoeff's desk in the schoolhouse, and that the *onbashi* make certain of it that Zoeff got it, also that Zoeff be not interfered with in any way for the length of a week.

"Much rather would I have you go with it, Osman," he turned to his *zaptieh*, "but if you were missing to-morrow, I'd have to answer questions. And I care little what happens Tuesday, once we get to Livady. For we shall meet our man—you can trust Apostle Boyan to make his way through the Tetino sentry-watches."

Then he turned to the peasant:

"There are some Christian curs that give the wrong name. But after the beech-splinter I always try the hot olive oil, and there is quicksilver a-plenty to dance up and down your ear-drums, and burning charcoal to make your soles sizzle. This cellar I lock and I unlock, do you hear, you *giaour?* In a couple of days I'll know whether you have been lying to me or not; then you may learn to know some things that your mother never taught you!"

Monday passed as usual, but on Tuesday morning Enver Pasha did not see Selim Effendi kick the *konak* gates open as was his custom, with Osman managing to rush in after him just in time to escape being hit by the gate as it slammed to.

"Off on a spree again, like as not, drunk as a seaman," Enver Pasha remarked, and thought little about it.

II

LIVADY is a village at the foot of the Payak Mountains, about five hours' ride on muleback from Tetino. The road from the city zigzags along the bank of the Vardar River, which here spreads its bed lazily and sprawls over the entire valley, making the country a rich rice-growing region but also one abounding in boggy swamps and treacherous morasses. Its close proximity to the Payak Mountains made the village a favorite rendezvous of insurgents, who found the mountain crags as hospitable as the fens of the Vardar in offering hiding-holes to the enemies of Islam.

But there was no branch organization of the Revolutionary Committee in Livady. Maybe the primitive life of the natives and their low level of intelligence could account for the fact. Their humble poverty and their superstitious character made hard any attempt to instill new ideas or inspire a spirit of opposition to the established order. They were mostly charcoalmen. Their skinny mules, grunting under huge loads of charred timber, formed an integral part of the Tetino landscape on market-days. Mules and bullocks were the only automobiles to be had in Livady; there was scarcely one horse in the whole village.

The mountainside was dotted with smoking charcoal-hills that looked at night like a hundred monstrous slumbering fireflies. Charred, as it were, for ages, all physiognomies had gloomed. From tanned youth one graduated to tawny manhood before attaining to that midnight ebony that marked the neck of the charcoal patriarch.

A foggy, glum, sullen day it was. The city merchant, wrapped in furs, with a shawl around his ears in regular Tetino fashion, nodded sociably at each peasant he met pacing the muddy road beside his mule, and, cursing the weather by all the saints in the Greek calendar, stopped his horse every little while to chat with some of the charcoalmen that looked more intelligent. The unsuspecting way in which the peasants answered his inquiries about Livady and recent church doings in the village, assured Selim Effendi of the complete success of his disguise. His man Osman, also on horseback, played his part of *zaptieh*-servant irreproachably.

Another half-hour's ride brought the two men to the main street of Livady, in front of the village livery-stable and within shouting distance of Stanko's Inn. Selim Effendi dismounted.

"Now, Osman," he turned to the *zaptieh*, "here is your chance. If we catch that rascal, you'll be an *iuzbashi* in a week, with enough gold jingling in your pockets to make anybody dance to your music. Three elbow-lengths tall, Osman, and as for girth, neither a grasshopper nor a hog. Gray eyes, dark hair; had French tailored clothes when last seen in Salonica, the time when he fooled Azni Pasha's entire police force. But no one outside the revolutionary organization knows exactly how the Apostle looks. So keep your eyes open for a priest's cassock and a flowing beard—those are his own words, Osman:

"Of a priest's cassock and a flowing beard,
Nor Turk nor Moslem ever is afeared!

"I'll be on the watch for him at the Inn. But you sort of look after the horses, like a real *zaptieh*-servant, and scan the face of each that passes down the street."

And then, turning toward the café barber shop in Stanko's courtyard, he yelled at the *zaptieh* in regular city-merchant style: "Don't you let my horse starve, either, do you hear? Give him plenty of oats, and have him ready to start back in a couple of hours. I must be back in Tetino by sundown. And come over to Stanko's by-and-by; I may need you. Wake up, you flat-footed zany! Why are you staring at me like an ox at a painted door?"

Stanko's was not a pretentious café even for a village of Livady's size. A squarish box of brick and pine boards in front of the inn proper, it might have reminded one of a gateman's lodge at a Salonica palace. One side was given over to Stanko's coffee-place and bar-counter combined, and behind it was a door connecting with a sleeping-room for the innkeeper and his help. The corner on the other side of Stanko's bar was occupied by the barber-shop end of the establishment. An old armchair, with the back sawed off and hinged to the seat, the top part being attached to a rope which could be pulled and regulated by means of a pulley fastened to the wall, served just as well as a Salonica leather-covered, hydraulic-power contraption; and, if the mirror was fly-specked, the razor at least was never dull and there was always lather enough on hand to shave a grizzly.

Some sentimental chromos of French or Italian descent, pasted on the walls, lent some color to the whitewashed interior, and in one corner an ikon of St. George killing the Dragon added the finishing touch of art. Cigarette-box etiquettes were glued in rows over the smoking divan, and on the low tabourets in front were earthen ash-trays, boxes of matches and empty wine-bottles. A *mangal* piled high with charcoal glowed in the center of the shop, and its sparks were a welcome sight on such an afternoon.

Stanko, the innkeeper, was tending his coffee-pot by the fire, and greeted the fur-clad city merchant with the typical village *cafeji's* bow

"St. Demeter bless your liver this afternoon, traveler; may you stay here long and like it!"

"Your Livady is colder than ice to-day," Selim grumbled by way of response. "Get me a hot brandy and some Prespa wine; I am three-quarters frozen."

"Stanko keeps no traveler waiting; so help me St. Petka, you shall have it all in a twinkle!" and the innkeeper stepped down through the trap-door to where he kept his liquors.

Selim was no Mohammedan teetotaler; he gulped down his brandy with as much zest and as little water as any Christian toper in all Tetino, and got drunk as often. His desire to justify an irrepressible craving had taken the form of a sort of fixed idea that brandy cleared his brain when he wanted to be alert and snappy in his movements; and this fixed idea persisted in spite of abundant proof of many a sad experience to the contrary. So when Stanko returned from his cellar Selim Effendi for a moment forgot the object of his journey to Livady.

Having shaken himself up a little bit, the Effendi looked about the place. A younker, evidently Stanko's apprentice in the tonsorial art, was lathering some one's face. Apparently dozing on the divan, however, his face turned toward the window, was a priest in a cassock. The beard was flowing enough. At the sound of Selim's voice the priest had sleepily turned toward him and half-opened his eyes, then turned back and dropped into a doze again.

III

NOT in Selim Effendi's most optimistic dreams had it occurred to him that he would stumble upon the Apostle napping the moment he entered Stanko's precincts.

Now the Tipsy Bloodhound was no fool, and he knew that Apostle Boyan had equally little claim to membership in the category of idiots. That a man who knew himself to be so fiercely hounded should be so reckless as to indulge in the luxury of a public nap was hard to explain on any other supposition than, perhaps, complete physical and mental exhaustion. But, *was he really asleep?* For the one hasty glance the apparently dozing priest had given him before resuming his slumbers was far too keen and intelligent for a man just disturbed in his nap.

The entire situation flashed on Selim. The Apostle was on the watch for his man from Poliany, and was simulating sleepiness in order to avoid unnecessary and undesirable conversations with other parties. Evidently he had full faith in the completeness of his incognito. The Turkish police might be on the lookout for him in Tetino, in places like Dedov Rid and Poliany, where *comitajis* were plenty; but not in a charcoal-hole like Livady.

"You ubiquitous rascal!" Selim thought, "if you only knew that your messenger is starving in my cellar this minute and that a copy of your letter to 'Robespierre' is in my pocket!" He sat down on the divan next to the priestly-clad figure and, absorbing Stanko's intoxicants to thaw his blood, beat his brains to hatch out some scheme of making sure of the Apostle.

Selim Effendi had come to Livady in the guise of an ikon-dealer. The choice of this particular form of disguise had suggested itself by the disguise dictated by the Apostle himself in his letter to the Poliany schoolmaster, for it seemed to him that an ikon-dealer had natural claims on the attention of a man in cassock. And, once he could get at his man without exciting suspicion, he could trust his "twelve-shot-straight" revolver and the steel grip of Osman's paw. A plan was slowly assuming definite shape in his mind—a plan that appealed to Selim's sense of humor, besides being safe and effective.

He had Stanko move the *mangal* to the corner of the room nearer the barber shop, where he could look into the street, and, seating himself *à la Turque* on a cushion in front of it, went on sipping at his brandy and looking out of the low, grimy window. Then his eyes turned to the "St. George Killing the Dragon" which beautified the corner diagonally opposite.

"Innkeeper," he asked, "who is that half-naked bully that's trying to tickle a lizard with his goad in your picture over there?"

"Half-naked bully tickling a lizard! Good Lord deliver us poor sinners!" Stanko began, crossing himself piously. "Be you a Catholic or an unbeliever, traveler, that you don't recognize St. George and the Dragon? St. George of all saints, sir!"

"Oh, it is St. George killing the Dragon, eh? Well now, innkeeper, I meant no harm by my question, but my eyes are giving out, and I just couldn't tell what it stood for. The St. Georges *I* sell, to be sure, are a different matter. You can tell *my* St. Georges at a hundred paces."

"So 'tis an ikon-pedler you be, traveler?" Stanko inquired.

"An ikon-merchant, right you have it. My brother is the Archdeacon of the St. Panteleimon monastery in the holy Athos; his hermits paint those ikons between midnight and sunrise, and every blessed one is blessed with holy-water from the fountain of St. Panteleimon under the altar. I sell them, but only to good Christians, to priests and deacons and pious innkeepers, as I may chance to find one in a week's journeying. Our ikons are sanctified, and if an unbeliever or a rascal touches them, wo betide the house where the holy ikon has been thus insulted! Why, innkeeper, my St. Georges are almost alive, and the Dragon spits real fire! If you touch him during Lent with greasy hands it would burn your fingers!"

"Virgin Mary and Holy St. Calliope have mercy on our souls and deliver us from fires everlasting!" Stanko was a pious idiot and made use of a wide acquaintance with the celestial community in his exclamations.

"You are a good Christian, innkeeper? Stanko is your name?"

"Stanko is my name, traveler."

"Well, here comes my *zaptieh*-servant. Now then, you Armenian tortoise, where have you been lolling all this while? Didn't I tell you that there was a pious innkeeper here that wanted one of our real live St. Georges with the fire-spitting dragons? Hurry up and bring a couple of them over here, and have him choose the one he likes best!"

The reclining figure in the cassock hardly stirred during this speech of Selim's.

"Yes, Stanko," the Effendi continued, "if you wish to find out whether a man is cheating you, just get him to touch the dragon's tongue with his third finger, and watch it blister! My ikons never lie. Fact is, I can't sell you any, no matter how much money you may offer for it, until you have touched the dragon yourself while chanting the '*Gospody pomiluy*' of the holy liturgy. If it doesn't burn you, you can have it free for nothing and without cost."

"What! The St. George ikon?"

"Why, yes, provided you do your share in an experiment I am going to try."

The door opened and Osman walked in noisily, with a package bulging out from under his coat. Selim noticed the napping priest suddenly turn around and shoot a glance at the new-comer, and then continue his snoring. Stanko grinned at Selim Effendi and nodded toward the dozing figure:

"A priest's son is the devil's grandson nowadays, traveler. God alone knows where he has been last night. Said he came from Tetino, where he had been visiting some sick parishioners, and then he said he was going on a pilgrimage to the Great on High! Well, I don't know about that—and far be it from me, merchant, to speak ill of a priest in cassock, the Virgin Mary bless my sinful heart!"

"Well, that's what I was coming to, Stanko," the Effendi continued. He relieved the servant of his package. Then, beckoning to the innkeeper to sit down, Selim Effendi moved his cushion closer to him and began whispering in his ear:

"Here is what I think, Stanko. When I was at St. Panteleimon's last time, my brother, Archdeacon Azarias, told me: 'Look out wherever you go, brother; the Evil One is abroad.' 'The Evil One?' says I. 'Yes,' he answered, 'the very Satan himself. The Lord has given him leave to travel all over Macedonia in the garb of a priest and see whomsoever he can snare. The Lord wishes to find out how many of his servants can tell each other from the Devil. Pretty hard thing to do with some of them, brother!' That's what my brother the Archdeacon told me."

"By St. Onuphry and by St. Sophrony! And have you seen him anywhere in your travels?" Stanko was crossing himself and mumbling the "*Gospody pomiluy*."

"*Shhh!*" Selim Effendi cautioned. "Not so loud! I asked my brother the Archdeacon: 'And how can I recognize him? Shall I try my dragon on him and blister his fingers?' 'By no means,' says he, 'the St. Georges are no good except for mortal men. But I had a dream last night, and,' my brother the Archdeacon said, 'I saw the Holy Parchment of St. Panteleimon curl up on the thirty-third page. I opened the book first thing after liturgy, and this is what I read: "By his beard shalt thou know him, the Evil One that keepeth awake in the night and sleepeth in the daytime with the owl. By his beard and his cassock shalt thou know him. Thou shalt bind his feet and his eyes shalt thou put to confusion, and his beard shalt thou pluck and cast away. For a sleeping servant is unto the Lord an abomination." Whatever that means, brother,' my brother the Archdeacon says, 'whatever that means, I have not pondered yet.'

"Well, Stanko," the Effendi continued, "you feel where the wind is blowing? I have been watching him over there on the smoking-divan, and if he doesn't answer the Holy Book of St. Panteleimon to an iota! Now, innkeeper, as you are a Christian and an honest man, help me capture the Devil, and the St. George is yours for nothing."

"Holy St. John of Rylo, traveler! I must go and fix up some things in the inn—excuse me!"

"If you don't, Stanko,"—Selim ignored his remark,—"if you don't help, your inn will be accursed from this day forth and forever more; for the Devil damns every spot that he lays his head upon!"

"Good Lord and Virgin Mary have mercy on our souls! What do you want me to do, kind brother of the Archdeacon?"

"Talk about something else, and get me some strong hempen rope and a dish of red pepper. Then, when I try to bind him, if he should put up a fight, you just throw the red pepper in his eyes and my *zaptieh* will be on hand to give him all he wants. And listen, innkeeper,"—Selim spoke aloud for effect—"get me some cucumber pickles while you are about it."

"In a second, traveler. The Lord have mercy!" Stanko answered.

A raucous voice from the barber chair scolded at the apprentice:

"Steady, you green-haired little monkey, steady! What do you think you are about—plucking a rooster or sheep-shearing? Just dare scratch me, and I'll skin your hide for you!" And then, as Stanko returned: "Innkeeper, you've got to do it yourself! I am not going to let that puppy scratch at my face another minute!"

"There, there, customer," the innkeeper answered; "he is doing his best. I can't shave you myself, because my right thumb is sore. Ivan, don't you cut the customer, else I'll pack you off to your father again!"

Selim Effendi barely glanced at the splenetic city man in the barber chair. But the Effendi's eyes were fixed on the napping priest, who was beginning to get restless. It was not a mere matter of overpowering him; that was easy enough, with Osman on hand. But Selim Effendi wished to capture his man and get away without any one's being the wiser. He had reasons for moving in the dark. His very expedition to Livady, undertaken as it was without Enver Pasha's knowledge, was a plain breach of Tetino police regulations, which only a spectacular move—like walking in the *konak* first thing Wednesday morning with the Apostle tied and bound—could atone for.

Moreover, Selim did not know the political leanings of his superstitious innkeeper, or, for that matter, of the city man in the chair. It was safer to make an ally of Stanko in a holy war against the Devil than risk having him as an enemy in a plot to catch the Apostle. Once he had his man tied and helpless, he could afford to assert his police authority.

Before the napping man in cassock had had a chance to realize what was happening, one quick blow on the part of Osman had pinned him to the divan and, while the innkeeper dashed a handful of red pepper into his face, Selim Effendi bound him hand and foot with his long rope. At the cry of the prisoner, the city man in the chair made a sudden jerk, and the apprentice almost slashed off his ear. Ivan had overheard part of his master's conversation with the ikon-dealer, which partly accounted for his nervousness, for the lad was as superstitious as his master.

The city man did not interfere. It would have done no good anyway; he was alone against a lot of religious fanatics. Or did he have reasons of his own for not caring to mix in? In Macedonia people often have reasons for minding their own business.

"Now hurry up!" he snapped at the apprentice. "Do you think I am going to camp in this chair? 'Tend to your shaving!"

"*Na zdravie*, sir, good-luck to you!" murmured Ivan the apprentice as he wiped his customer's neck with a hot towel. "I don't mean any harm, sir, but one gets nervous sometimes."

The shaved man tossed a piaster on the chair and turned toward the other side of the room.

It was a spectacle. The man in cassock was on the floor, sneezing and cursing in his impotence. The three men laughed derisively at him. Ivan looked from a distance; the Devil had terrors for his superstitious heart even when a captive.

"Here, lad!" Selim cried to the apprentice. "Don't be afraid—he can't bite you now. Pull his beard, and see it come off! If you pull it loose, you'll marry into a rich family."

Ivan approached, hesitated a moment, then made for the man on the floor, and the next moment the impetus of his own lurch backwards sent him toppling over, with the mass of hair in his hands.

The prisoner's face was smooth; there was barely one day's growth of beard on it.

"Ha!" Selim exclaimed, "there we have

him, plucked and peppered! Let me have his feathers, Ivan! Now then, Devil Effendi, we've got you where we want you—eh, Stanko?"

"The Lord is too high and the Czar is too far, they say," the innkeeper sagely reflected. "But who'd have thought, ikon-dealer, that I was born to see the very Devil right in my own café!"

"Such is life, Stanko. 'Of a priest's cassock and a Devil's beard, what ikon-dealer ever is afeared?'—if he has a brother like my brother the Archdeacon!"

"How long till sunset, innkeeper?" the city man inquired.

Stanko consulted his timepiece: "Four hours, traveler."

"You are going somewhere, sir?" Selim inquired, anxious to have as few people as possible around while he examined his prisoner's pockets.

"Yes, I must be in Tetino by sundown."

"Let me go, I tell you, madman!" the man in cassock was protesting. "What in God's name do you take me for?"

"In God's name we take you for the Devil," Selim derisively explained. "But in my own name I take you for a shoveler in the Den of Lions, for one that has dealings with some 'Great on High.' Do you ever remember your love-letters, Devil Effendi?"

"Oh-ho! That's who I am, eh?" He looked at his captor in amazement. Then the steely eye of the city man caught his and the prisoner grasped the unspoken message. A mere shoveler more or less did not matter; but He that Prepareth the Way could not be spared.

"So that's who I am!" repeated the Poliany schoolmaster.

"So that's who you are!" retorted the Effendi, "and this is what you have!" He pulled out of an inside pocket from under the victim's shirt a bundle of papers and some sealing-wax.

"Don't look at these papers, innkeeper," Selim cautioned; "they'll give you bad dreams! You are going to Tetino soon, friend?" He turned to the city man, who was apparently hesitating near the doorway.

"Yes, must be going pretty soon," the latter answered. "Gulbenk Effendi is waiting for me in Tetino, to close a deal in rice."

Selim Effendi offered the rice-merchant a glass of brandy. The latter merely touched it with his lips.

"You also are going back this evening."

There was no question in his voice, but Selim answered:

"Yes, as soon as I have made heads or tails of this devilish scribble in his papers."

"So you really think you have the Devil there?"

"Ivan, go and get me another bottle of Stanimuka wine," Selim ordered the apprentice. Stanko had gone to the inn proper to look after the wants of a peasant who was to stay overnight. "The Devil he is for these cattle," he explained, "but, my name being Selim Effendi of Tetino, you can guess who this man is. The capturing of this man was worth some original maneuvering. It will be a sensation in the *konak* to-morrow morning when Selim Effendi kicks the iron gates open and walks in with the trophy—what?"

"It will be a sensation, yes. Well, good road to you, Effendi; Allah take care of you, and the Devil will look after your baggage."

IV

SELIM was losing patience. "For the third time: Did you see your man from Poliany or didn't you?"

But the prisoner did not look up.

"I could open that clam-shell mouth of yours on short notice, but when I do I want to be your whole audience. There has been hardly any one here to-day, but who knows what a rabble of charcoal devils will be around here by sundown!"

Slowly the minutes passed as the Effendi was struggling with the meaningless jargon of his victim's papers. He turned to his *zaptieh* in a low voice:

"What do you think, Osman? I'd rather be through with the farce and have this thing tied to the post next to that low peasant in our cellar. That idiotic innkeeper may catch on to our game, and I don't know his persuasion on matters political. Besides—that rice-merchant; we should have held on to him. I was foolish to blab so much. I want to try my monkey-wrench argument with this Devil and see whether it will loosen his jaw. Ho, you little one, we are going!"

Ivan loaded up with half a dozen bottles of brandy and Prespa vintage, and the Effendi and Osman dragged out the man in cassock.

"I wonder whether that schoolmaster of

his from Poliany is coming here after all. I'll wager you the *onbashi* never delivered the Apostle's letter as I ordered him. What do you think, Osman?"

"The *onbashi* did deliver it; don't you worry." It was almost the first time the prisoner had spoken.

"You fool, answer my questions when you are the one asked!" and Selim's boot dug into his prisoner's stomach. They were just outside the gate when the innkeeper appeared from the other side of the courtyard.

"Hola, Stanko, can you guess what I am going to do with him? Take him straight to my Bishop in Tetino and have him branded as the Devil in public, then send an account of it all to the Patriarch in Constantinople. They'll make me an archdeacon for it, and maybe an abbot. If they do, I'll take you over to my monastery to look after the winery—what?"

"But the St. Georges?" Stanko inquired.

"I did not wish to open the package in the Devil's presence. But you will find them there on the divan. They'll pay for your brandy and Prespa bottles!"

"St. Onuphry and St. Sophrony preserve you, and St. Panteleimon multiply your children! *Na dobur put!*"

"*Zbogom!*" the Effendi replied in peasant fashion, and Stanko entered the café. The others turned down the street towards the livery-stable.

"Where is your horse, Effendi?" Osman noticed the empty stall the moment he entered the stable. A folded piece of paper was nailed on the stall-bar. Selim snatched it, and the same hand-printed sort of message in Bulgarian greeted his eyes:

To the Devil in Stanko's Inn, Care of Archdeacon Ananias's brother. From the Den of Lions—Greeting! He that Prepareth the Way sent you a message last Sunday by a man who never returned. Yours is not a coward's heart, Robespierre; fear not. It was a wise whim of mine, to change my disguise; I knew you without being recognized myself. But the little fool that shaved me took too long a time to it, else the Effendi would have found us together. That brat's slow bungling caused your capture. But fear not, my Robespierre. The ikon-dealer will never take you to the bishop. You are worth nothing to him, and Selim Effendi won't have Enver Pasha laugh at his story. It is not cowardice that makes me desert you; I am too much needed now. Keep your mouth locked; and may your papers be never deciphered by Selim and his like. I leave you in your captor's pocket, but fear not. Nobody wants you; you are useless baggage now, and that's your safety. I have bartered my two-mule carriage for the Effendi's horse. A fine animal. It will carry me where Bloodhounds can't even sniff me.

"Of a rice-merchant with a shaven beard,
Nor Turk nor Moslem ever is afeared!"

Selim Effendi reread the message, nonplused, but only for a moment. Then he stuck the letter in front of the Poliany schoolmaster's nose.

"Read it, you crafty fox! Read this, and see if you haven't found your match! Who'd have ever thought that rice-merchant was your man! Oh no, *you* are not the Apostle, you are just plain 'Robespierre' of Poliany! That is, if I am idiotic enough to believe what the real 'Robespierre' of Poliany has written on this rag of paper! But you won't eel out this time by any such trickery! When I hang you upside down in my cellar you'll tell me a different story!"

"Robespierre of Poliany" did not reply. His surprise at the Apostle's daring letter was second only to his amazement at the Turk's wrong interpretation of it. Of one thing at least he felt sure—He that Prepareth the Way was safe.

"Robespierre's" spirits rose, and the efficient way in which he met Selim's threats made the latter waver a little. Who could tell but that the letter in his hands was actually penned by the Apostle? Which one was the real bird? If the thief of his horse were the real Apostle, he had gone to Poliany, the nearest insurgent center where assistance could be obtained. Selim had heard too much of the Apostle's trickeries to believe in the final way in which the writer of the letter consigned the prisoner of Stanko's Inn to the kindness of destiny.

However, even in case his first interpretation of the message was the correct one, still the schoolmaster of Poliany could have all the better reason for rousing up a relief party in Poliany to save the captured Apostle. If only the *onbashi* there could be stirred into action! Selim Effendi thought longingly of the Tetino telegraph-office. He wished the apostolic baggage were safely caged in his Tetino cellar.

It was fast thinking, and the conclusion reached was a bold one.

"Osman," Selim shouted to the *zaptieh*, "mount your horse and gallop the life out of him straight to Poliany! Rouse the *onbashi* to turn the whole village downside up and capture that rice-merchant! Also describe this man to him, and let us see whether you and I have been chasing a swarm of bees or a cloud of beetles. I shall drive right back to the city with this baggage and wait for you and your news in my jail-cellar. Off with you, Osman! Think of the stake and don't lose a minute!"

But hardly had Osman vanished down the road when Selim Effendi realized the complexity of his situation, for inside of two minutes he discovered the immediate reason for the rice-merchant's making away with his horse. One of the two mules that was to drive him and his prisoner to Tetino was lame and would not budge an inch!

It was growing gloomier every minute. A thick pulpy fog was settling all around. Mud-bespattered peasants with their charcoal-laden donkeys kept passing down the street, all bound for Tetino, to sleep in the city and be on time bright and early for the Wednesday bazaar on the morrow. A couple of them stopped for a moment or two in front of the stable and stared at the puzzled police magistrate. In a flash the Turk had reached a decision. He jumped at one of the peasants whose donkey looked the sturdier of the two:

"Here, you, come with me!"

The charcoal was accordingly dumped on the street, the rice-merchant's mule and the peasant's were mated to tug the rickety carriage, and the charcoal-pedler turned driver. The latter needed only to look from the barrel of Selim's long revolver to the bound figure of the man in cassock right inside the door to lose any idea of opposition which may have at first suggested itself to his peasant brain.

The Turk lined his conveyance with Stanko's bottles; and then a Mohammedan fancy suggested a move characteristic of his failing for the humorous.

"Here, you priest, listen to me! Wasn't there a bishop once that rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass?" There was in his voice the scornful note of pretended ignorance.

The Poliany schoolmaster did not look up.

"You don't answer, cur? You, charcoal dirt, can't you talk either?"

"Once I heard the priest chant something about that, Effendi."

"Well, this time we'll have the Devil himself riding into Tetino on your donkey's back!" And the charcoalman had to assist the Effendi while the latter piled the bulky frame of his prisoner on the donkey's back and fastened him on like a load of Livady charcoal. For the first time Dascal Zoeff of Poliany loudly proclaimed his identity, but the Turk would not listen.

"I don't want to hear another word from you till we enter my cellar! Shut up!" and he pulled out a dirty, greasy rag from inside the stable and gagged his helpless victim.

"Now off with you as fast as you can drive, right straight to Tetino!" he yelled to the charcoalman. "I'll hold this revolver pointed at your neck, so don't you dare play any dirty games on me!"

The peasant's donkey announced the departure of the improvised train in shrill, plaintive whinnies.

V

"SO YOU are a charcoal-pedler, eh?" The team was at the outskirts of the village.

"My face would give me the lie if I said nay, Effendi!" The peasant spoke in the Payak dialect, a mixture of Bulgarian and Vlakh, which the Effendi understood but did not speak. A tawny charcoalman he was; his sooty, smoky face, plastered with the carbon dirt of a hundred charred pine-trees, bore but a distant resemblance to a human countenance. A black, greasy sheepskin ***kalpak*** covered the major part of his cranium. Sunken beneath his singed eyebrows, a pair of glassy orbs blinked with the colorless stupidity that only five centuries of thraldom can stamp upon the physiognomy of a race. He was taciturn, and conversed readily only with his donkey.

The rickety patter of the carriage disposed the Effendi for the taste of Stanko's vintages. Bottle after bottle dropped by the roadside.

The last bottle would have followed its predecessors, but the revolver slipped by the roadside instead, without the Turk's being any the wiser. The brandy and the Prespa wine were a stupefying combination. Selim could think of nothing but Tetino, and his tongue rattled continually:

"Listen here, look, how is it now, how is it—far to Tetino? Is it far to Tetino? —Tetino, look you, or I'll blow your brains out for you!" and the Effendi brandished the empty brandy-bottle. The charcoalman noted the weapon, and answered in his Payak drawl:

"Three turns, a down-you-go, and there you be, Effendi!"

Twilight fell over the Vardar valley, and in less than an hour the evening fog was so impenetrable that the driver could see hardly more of the Effendi than a pair of alcohol-glowing eyeballs. The turnpike was deserted and the Turk was drunk. Enver Pasha's guards were nowhere to be seen; it was too raw a night for sentry-watches.

"Get up there! Get *up!* Just a little while longer, brother!" the charcoalman yelled to his donkey, and before Selim could open his eyes the carriage had turned to the left from the Tetino road and was creaking down a lane across muddy pastures and ricefields and past the bog-marshes of the Vardar River. The mismated team had some trouble in pulling the carriage in concord. A mudhole that almost upset the carriage roused the drunken Turk, and he yelled at the peasant:

"Hey there, you, I'll blow out your brains! How is it—far to Tetino?"

"One more turn, the down-you-go, and there you'll lie, Effendi."

The Moslem grunted and relapsed into taciturnity.

"Cheer up, my donkey, cheer up, my brother!" the driver called to his donkey. Except for an occasional nasal grunt, the gagged schoolmaster on the donkey's back called no attention to his location. Pretty soon the loose-jointed carriage began pattering down a rather steep incline. Through the fog the brandy-dimmed orbs of Selim Effendi saw a flash of water some hundred elbow-lengths below.

"Look out there!" he yelled. "Down there, you, I'll blow out your brains! See how it flickers! What's that—hidden treasure-lights?"

"Hidden frogs' eyes!" the driver laughed back. "That's the 'down-you-go' I was talking about."

"It didn't shine that way to me this morning when I came from Tetino—Tetino—how—is it far to Tetino?"

"Don't suppose it did. Get up, my donkey! Cheer up, my brother, we're almost there!" and the peasant lashed the rice-merchant's mule.

The charcoalman's donkey did not seem to like his comrade's company. As a result, the improvised team had no definite policy in their work.

"Get up there!" bellowed the driver. *Splash-splash* went the team, and the carriage seemed to sink all of a sudden into a quicksand quagmire.

"Look out, you charcoal devil! Are you bogging me? I'll blow out your brains for you!" and the intoxicated Turk jammed the empty bottle against the peasant's neck. "Is this Tetino—or Vardar River?"

"Both are pretty close, Effendi, but this is just a mud-pool. Haw there!"

For some little time the driver busied himself with the carriage wheels; hammering at one in particular; then he jumped to his seat again, lashed the mule savagely and let go.

The team plunged ahead and the carriage sailed a thousand elbow-lengths into the fen.

Then suddenly, without any warning whatever, something snapped. The left front wheel splashed into the marsh, the rig lost equilibrium, and the Turk yawped:

"Hey, you charcoal devil!"

"There we are, my donkey! Here we are, my brother!" the driver yelled, and there was a new ring in his voice. He jumped on to the carriage-pole, cursing and shouting in turns, but not for very long. The peasant with the mud-bespattered face and the colorless blinking eyes had unharnessed the team, mounted the rice-merchant's mule and was leading away his own donkey with the human baggage loaded thereon before the inebriate could realize what was happening.

The carriage began filling up with clammy, creepy fen-mire that gripped Selim's feet in an icy clutch and shook him from his brandy-stupor. The Moslem leaped from his seat with an oath and aimed his empty wine-bottle at the dark figures in the mist. But empty bottles do not pop.

"Cool your head, Effendi! Cool your head and warm your feet!" The voice was a little way off to the left, and it was no longer Payak dialect that the charcoalman spoke, but pure Bulgarian, the Bulgarian of Selim's two messages. "You are half-an-hour's swim from dry land, and another two hours' walk from a living soul after we are gone. It is almost freezing now, Effendi, but the Evil One doesn't bother folks in cold weather!"

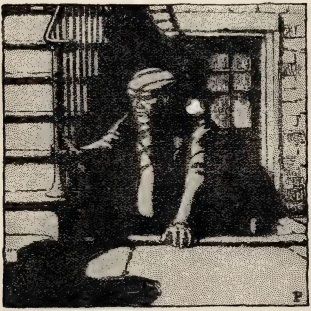
"Hey there, you charcoalman! You'll grease the rope for this!"

"Don't slander the trade, Selim. I am a priest by training, a revolutionist by faith, and an Apostle by profession. You remember that old priest in Vodena whom you roasted on a spit like a lamb-chop? That was my father—God rest his soul! That was the story that greeted me when I came home from the seminary. And those two girls, the daughters of Stephan the miller in Novoselo? And the carpenter's bride of two months in Ridovy? Yours is a long, long story, Selim Effendi; and here is the last chapter! You couldn't read those papers in the schoolmaster's pocket? Here is something to satisfy your curiosity, Selim. On the fifteenth of January, in Novoselo, a congress will decide to light the fuse that will blow to smithereens your whole Government. But my brother-in-freedom is groaning on my donkey's back. A cold nightmare to you, Effendi, and may the charcoalmen bless me for ridding the land of another bloodsucker!"

And the two figures vanished into the fog.

The wheel-rims had sunk out of sight. The Turk stared wildly around. He could see nobody, hear nobody. Far away in the distance his eyes could catch the faintest glimmer of what he imagined was Tetino. All around him was that glassy, creepy, serpentine ice-glaze of the treacherous Livady Morass.

And the carriage slowly sank, sank.



THE STRANGLER

by Paul E. Triem

A YOUNG man, whose clean-cut features and well-groomed figure clipped him sharply from among the riffraff of the lower quarter of the city, picked his way deliberately among the loiterers of Washington Street and turned in, with an air of leisurely consideration, at a squalid corner saloon.

It was an unpromising place for such a man to quench his thirst. Half a dozen ragged loungers slouched about the musty, ill-lighted barroom, scowling suspiciously at each other or making flabby advances toward the white-aproned mixer of fancy beverages, with the hazy idea, apparently, of scraping up enough courage to attempt to "work" him for a drink on credit—the credit of Washington Street, where every second man was a thief or worse. The newcomer skirted the ranks of these practical-minded philosophers and approached the bar; with something of an effort he swung a Gladstone bag up in front of him, and let it settle with a thud on the rosewood barrier.

"A glass of half-and-half," he requested, inspecting the bartender through two keen, level and half-amused eyes.

He emptied his glass deliberately, unconscious of the fact, or indifferent to it, that the room was still and that a dozen coarsely wrapped packages of emotions—mostly crude, ungentle emotions—were watching him greedily.

Then he unsnapped the clasp of the Gladstone bag and took from it something—a long, stoutly sewed sack of heavy duck, sodden with its burden of metal disks—disks that chinked and rubbed jovially together, giving out strange music.

The silence that had settled over the room remained unbroken, but the air quivered and thrilled with pent and explosive lusts and passions. The sack was full of gold, and more sacks like it could be seen in the Gladstone bag, stacked trimly together or elbowing for room with packages of bank-notes. No wonder the grip was heavy; here was a load for a strong man to try his muscles upon—and one worth carrying! A Rockefeller or a Morgan might have stooped to pit his strength against the inertia of this burden, for it constituted a millionaire's ransom.

The bartender came roughly out of his stupor.

"You fool!" he cried, "you—you —— fool! What do you mean coming in here with all them beans on you? Are you trying to give this house a bad name—want to get your wooden head split open in front of our bar and have the police nail us up? What—what in ——"

He paused, panting with anger; words—even the coarse, bitter words of the quarter below the dead-line—failed to ease his burning sense of injustice.

The young man of the Gladstone bag smiled a calm, impersonal smile. He had taken a coin from the top of the open sack; now he replaced the sack and closed the grip. He even seemed oblivious to the fact that the room had filled suddenly, as if the tropic heat of men's greed had caused a rising of the moral atmosphere, so that other creatures of the street had been sucked in. Stevedores and shanty-boatmen, Americans, Jews, Greeks and even Chinamen—they skulked close to him, licking parched, ashy lips.

And the creator of all this excitement paid his bill, counted his change, and then, apparently as a matter of routine, slipped a magazine pistol from his side pocket and examined it critically. The little flat hammer was drawn down like the head of a viper, and the safety lever stuck straight back.

Apparently satisfied by this inspection, the young man turned and walked toward the door. Occasional stupid or sullen figures barred his way, but an instant's smiling regard from those ironical gray eyes cleared the path as if by magic. A moment later the room was empty—empty save for the score or so of white-faced, rat-eyed vags and floaters.

"By the Eternal!" the bartender blasphemed hoarsely, "that knob's got the gall of a brass hippopotamus! Come in here with all that agony on him—and I wouldn't like to be the gent to try to lift it, neither! That grin of his'd throw a cold wave into the pit of hell itself!"

A few of the loiterers in the saloon, recovering more quickly than their fellows from the stupor of the moment, had hurried out into the street after the departed visitor. He was gone, however; at any rate, only one person succeeded in keeping within sight of him, and that one was not proclaiming the fact, even in a stage whisper. Blondie Doyle, with his eyes glowing like the eyes of some night-hunting beast of prey, stood unobtrusively in the shadow of a row of warehouses.

Blondie hadn't followed the stranger from the saloon—he knew a trick worth a dozen of that; he had preceded him, having melted from the room while his companions were crowding toward the storm-center. Blondie never lost his head, never yielded to impulses of mere curiosity or wonder. He needed his head in his business and, thanks to his adroit use of foresight and of a sort of constructive imagination that was natural to him, Blondie had been safely hidden when the man with the satchel emerged.

Moreover, he had taken up his hiding-place in the right quarter, for the stranger came directly toward him, after dodging into the unlighted alley which Blondie had chosen as his probable path of exit. In a moment he passed, walking swiftly and very quietly, and went on up the gap cut between rows of warehouses. Of course the others had been too late to see him disappear into this gloomy crevice—Blondie had foreseen that, too.

He waited till the soft-footed pedestrian had advanced almost into the edge of the muffling blanket of darkness, then slid out of the friendly doorway that had sheltered him.

Blondie was working with the ease and adroitness of one who knows his trade by "feel" as well as by sight. He need not keep behind sheltering projections, for the man ahead neither paused nor turned. Blondie gained upon him till he was within a dozen paces, and held this distance. For half a block ahead the alley was flat and bare; there would be something to hide, presently, and the strangler waited for an areaway.

A little farther along there appeared the sunken entrance to a deserted basement. Blondie knew the place as well as he knew his own strong fingers, and in an instant he had lessened the gap between himself and the man with the Gladstone bag, running easily and without a sound. Although he had left the saloon too early to see the pistol which the other carried, he knew perfectly well that the man with the grip was armed; every one who came below the dead-line was armed.

For a moment he paused, studying at close hand the details of the figure before him. He noted that the bag had grown no lighter; the man who carried it was breathing hard, and even as Blondie threw himself forward he saw the other swing his burden heavily from his right hand to his left.

Men had been garroted recently, in dark side streets of the town—gaily dressed theater-goers, whose diamonds twinkled red and green in the rays of distant street lights; business men carrying wallets or steel cash-boxes. Blondie remembered some of them as he leaped upon the man with the Gladstone bag—none of them had come into his hands so easily as had this present victim.

His left forearm crossed the other's throat and a hand was locked behind his head. There was a strangling sob—which, being a familiar sound in the garroter's business, produced no effect upon Blondie. He merely drew the struggling figure nearer, striking upward, as he did so, with his knee. He had frequently found this blow over the kidneys a decidedly sedative application in such cases.

And then, as he grunted a little and drew himself closer to his prisoner, something happened. It came very quickly, and one event melted into another with such perplexing rapidity that the garroter lost all knowledge of sequence. A hand gripped his wrist and twisted it forcibly around till the whole arm was strained and tense as a fiddle-string. Blondie felt the stab of millions of needles along the tortured nerve-fibers, and then, after an evanescent impression of lightness and flight, he fell with a great jar and was lying pinned by his still imprisoned arm. Something—probably a knee—was pressed mercilessly into the hollow of his neck and against the bone of his jaw.

Almost before Blondie knew that he was on the ground, he was twisted over, face down, and both arms were being pried up toward his shoulder-blades. He grunted with pain, but the man who was kneeling upon him merely gave his wrists an extra shove and proceeded to bind them tightly together.

Next, the garroter's ankles were roped, and presently Blondie, transformed into a long and uncouth bundle, was rolled with his face toward the distant, silver-white strip that represented the sky.

In the shadow of the narrow, unlighted way, he could just make out the calmly scrutinizing face of his captor, the young man of the satchel. Next moment the latter spoke.

"You came nearer making it than I intended to let you, my man," he commented grimly. "You certainly know how to administer a very efficient choking—although your hold lacks science. Now I could teach you—but we'll talk of that another time. You aren't hurt anywhere, are you?"

This question seemed to Blondie Doyle so utterly ridiculous, so absolutely and gratuitously silly, that he merely continued to stare into the hard, smiling eyes that looked into his own. It was as if he should ask a victim from whom he had just taken, by his own peculiar methods of finance, a roll of bills or a diamond stud, whether he were having a good time.

His companion seemed to understand Blondie's point of view, for he laughed and continued:

"It isn't that I give a continental about you as an individual," he explained coolly. "I'd have broken your neck and thought nothing of it if I hadn't needed you—but we'll talk this over in my quarters. Just lie still a bit, will you?"

He got up and stood looking at Blondie, then stooped quickly and lifted him in his arms, quite easily, in spite of the strangler's one hundred and eighty-odd pounds of brawn.

"I'll just leave you in this cellar entrance while I attend to a little business," he said, speaking more to himself than to Blondie. "I'll be back directly."

This was gratifying news to the garroter, who had the pleasure of being deposited in the areaway he had chosen for his victim. For a moment he could see the lithe figure of his mysterious captor framed in the murky light of the upper alley. Then he was alone.

IN SPITE of the fact that Blondie had reasons for not caring to await his captor's return, he was unable to budge the knots that bound him. He writhed about and strained and twisted, cursing in the meantime with all the earnestness of a devout Brahman singing incantations. He was still fighting a useless battle, some twenty minutes later, when he heard a sound that made him pause in puffing, blasphemous wonder.

It was the hum of a motor-car, which evidently was feeling its way toward him through the gloom of the midnight. Presently it stopped, and a moment later the same lithe figure which had disappeared up the stairs came bounding down them, and again Blondie was gathered into a pair of terrible arms—arms such as he had never dreamed of, scrapper and ex-ringman though he was.

"Easy's the word, my boy," the young man laughed as he clambered back to the street level.

A taxicab, with its red and green guard-lights casting weird daubs of color into the strange corners of the neighborhood, stood beside the strip of rotting, soggy boards that represented a sidewalk. The driver jumped down and opened the door as the strange pair approached.

"You can follow the main streets; if he makes a rumpus I'll quiet him," the man who carried Blondie commented. "Throw up my grip, will you, Larry?"

The garroter would have liked to nudge himself, just to be sure he was awake. He saw the chauffeur stagger toward the door, carrying the Gladstone bag that had baited him, Blondie Doyle, into this trap. The thing was deposited on the floor of the cab, the driver fastened the door, whose curtain was pulled low, and next instant there was the whir and grind of machinery thrown into gear, and he felt himself being borne swiftly through the darkness toward his unknown destination.

II

FOR a while the cab lurched as it crept forward, but gradually it gained speed, and Blondie decided the chauffeur had made his way into better-lighted streets and that the underworld had been left behind. He felt a decided reluctance toward anything in the way of an outcry or alarm; for even if he had forgotten the sinister comment of his companion to the driver, he realized that he was not exactly in a strategic position for any such move. Truly, the police might succeed in stopping the cab and making an investigation, but Blondie felt not the slightest desire to be investigated. So he leaned stolidly back against the cushions, glancing from time to time at the blotch of white that stood for the face of his captor.

After what he estimated as half an hour's ride, the machine swerved beneath him, slowed down and stopped. The door was opened and the young man beside Blondie jumped out.

"Keep your eye on my friend for a moment," he requested the driver, as he grasped the heavy bag and stepped upon the walk with it.

Blondie saw that the cab had stopped outside an old-fashioned stone house, one of a row of similar buildings. Under the narrow porch a light glimmered, casting feeble rays upon wide stone steps. He saw the man with the grip pass rapidly up these steps, admit himself with a key and disappear.

He was out again next moment and was standing beside the cab.

"I'm going to free your feet," he told Blondie, "but I'd advise you not to make the mistake of trying to get away."

The strangler imagined that the chauffeur must have been paid in advance or that some regular understanding in regard to pay existed between him and this eccentric person who was now leading him, Blondie Doyle, up a flight of stone stairs, for he heard the regular, cicada-like hum of the receding machine.

For the first time in his life there came into this strong man's consciousness a vague, troubling, half-realized sensation of fear—he was alone with a person whose like he had never encountered; he knew the terrible strength of that hand which rested lightly on his arm, but there was a subtle impression of moral power, of dominant will-force, in the other's mere silent presence that cowed Blondie and forced him to stumble along sullenly and without a definite thought of flight or resistance.

The door of the stone house opened and closed. The air was wonderfully cool and sweet within—the heated, dusty city seemed to have receded into an infinitely distant past, so that the strangler might have been on one of the planets. Something clicked and he stood blinking in the yellow light of an overhead lamp. He saw that he was standing in a broad reception-hall, and then he was pushed forward and through an open doorway. The lights here were turned on, and Blondie uttered an exclamation—something white, with great, dark holes for eyes and with its wonderfully perfect teeth gleaming at him in a sardonic grin, faced him from under a glass cover, nearly level with his face.

The man beside Blondie smiled. "They're harmless when they get to that stage, my friend," he commented. "Have a chair—I'll remove your bonds after we've reached an agreement."

The strangler's glance took in other details of the room; bookcases and reading-tables of Circassian walnut; a microscope and some instruments on a table of white enamel and plate glass; some curious, crooked-bladed swords on the wall—and then his eyes were drawn to his captor's face. The young man of the Gladstone bag sat opposite him, smiling almost benevolently.

"I'll wager it's some time since you had as interesting an evening as this," he said genially. "Not that I'm running down your ordinary devices for passing the time—if you're the man I'm looking for, you have not lived the life of a church warden hitherto. But I think this has been a little unusual. Now let me ask you a question. Do you want to earn some money—more money than you probably ever saw before?"

Blondie's eyes narrowed. He was beginning to grow accustomed to the unusual; and the mention of money and of a chance of acquiring some of it thoroughly stilled and poised his thoughts. He stared intently at the speaker.

"I'll tell you what I want you to do," the latter continued, "and you can decide whether you care to take the risks. In a small house standing by itself in the north part of town, at an address which I will furnish you later, an old gentleman lives alone, except for a cat. The old man and I worked together once at the project of making artificial diamonds of commercial size. We didn't succeed, but one of the by-products of our work was a discovery that was worth infinitely more to the world, and, perhaps, to us. We made rubber synthetically; pure, perfect rubber, with all the qualities of the tree-grown product."

He paused for a moment to watch the effect of this statement on the strangler, but Blondie was far from being impressed. He stared back indifferently and, with an amused shrug of disgust, the young man continued:

"Rubber is worth more from the viewpoint of political economy than diamonds, and I imagine this process is worth more in money than one for turning out perfect stones would be. However, that's neither here nor there. My part of the work was largely that of a superintendent in a factory. I had the general theory, and I had worked out many of the details. I hired Professor Hueber to help me with the myriads of formulæ that must be tested and retained or rejected. It was trying, nerve-wrecking work, and at times the old man showed signs of giving out. A week's rest usually put him on his feet again, however.

"He worked at this for two years, and then, late one night, he sent a messenger to my house to tell me that he had finished—that quite by accident he had found the missing element, and that the specimen of gum which he was sending had come out of his retort not more than half an hour before. He told me that he was exhausted and that he would retire at once, and asked me to come to the laboratory at ten the next morning."

The young man paused to open a drawer, from which he took a square of a dark red substance which he held up in front of Blondie Doyle. It was a pliable and elastic solid, which seemed to the strangler not a whit different from any other square piece of rubber.

"This is what he sent me," the speaker continued, "and from laboratory tests I have corroborated the old man's statement. This rubber grew in a retort instead of a tree, and the secret of making it is worth millions. You may be sure that I went to the laboratory at ten next morning, but at first the house seemed to be deserted. After I had knocked the third time a window was cautiously lifted above-stairs and some one dropped a cylinder of paper out on the steps beside me.

"I picked it up and found that it was a note addressed to me in a peculiarly irregular hand. I read it through twice—and then I realized that the old scientist had lost his reason! The strain, ending in sudden and unexpected success, had completely maddened him.

"He stated that he had worked out the formulæ and had put them, together with my manuscripts which detailed the preliminary work, into a receptacle in the house and had contrived a series of electrical connections so that from any point in his laboratory or living-rooms he could press a button which would ignite and utterly destroy the whole accumulation of material. He had blundered upon the perfecting link in the chain, and it was his to do with as he pleased. He would wager it against my share in the work: if I could obtain the manuscript, it was mine; but if he caught me within the house he would set off his infernal machine and put the discovery forever beyond my reach."

Again the young man paused and sat watching Blondie, his eyes, with their hint of glacial ice and of uncompromising determination, narrowed and fierce.

"What I want is a man with the courage and the skill to enter this house at night and get these papers. He will have this great advantage over me, that if he is caught at the work he will be taken for an ordinary burglar—and the manuscript will not suffer. He must be one built and trained for the business, cool even in danger and defeat, alert and strong and determined. And for this service I will pay ten thousand dollars, without a proviso or hitch. He will receive the money in any shape he desires to take it in, and will be free to spend it openly, without danger of protest or molestation. Now then, *do you want it?*"

He slid close to Blondie and shot out this last question with such force that the strangler blinked.

There was little considering to be done, however; Blondie had followed the young man's narrative closely enough to be able to understand what was required from him. It was in his line, and he knew that he could do it if it could be done.

"You can deal me in," he said, speaking gruffly and for the first time since he had been captured. "One thing I wants to ask, boss. Suppos'n, I tries my best and doesn't find the stuff—what then? Does I get the coin or the boot-toe?"

The scientist laughed. "Do your best and you'll not fail," he predicted. "I can tell you just where to look, but if anything goes wrong you won't lose your reward. The gods of this world have dealt bountifully with me, and I deal bountifully with those who try honestly to serve me. I believe you are my man. I fished for big fish; the sight of so much money scared out the little fellows, and you, who had the courage to follow into so forbidding a country, should have both the courage and the ability to succeed very easily against this old man."

He was smiling into Blondie's face, and the strangler felt his heart slow down and then start to sprint—there was something almost terrifying in that smile.

III

WHERE Blondie crouched, in the shadow of a hedge in the outskirts of the city, he might have been again plunged into his own underworld of gloom and darkness. About him, however, scattered cottages were set in squares of lawn and garden, and the fragrance of a bank of roses came to him, heavy and stifling as with the sodden breath of the night.

It was that deadest of all dead and lifeless periods, two o'clock in the morning. Somewhere near at hand a rooster flopped his wings and crowed raucously.

"I'd like to have a hind leg of you fried," the strangler grumbled, as he finished unlacing the second of his shoes and pulled it off with a jerk. "I could pretty near get it down raw, with the feathers on. That's the old buck's house, all right. I'll go in by that half window—the pantry, or maybe a bathroom."

He straightened up and walked across the dewy turf, pausing below the open window just long enough to look back and to listen for any sound from within or without. The world was as still as it could have been before the first sunrise, however, and with an easy movement Blondie reached up, hooked his hands over the sill and lifted himself till he was staring into the darkness of the room beyond. Cautiously he slid through and felt the cool touch of polished wood beneath his bare feet.

In his earlier years, before he became a garroter, Blondie had done work of this kind; the memory of old times came to him now, and he worked with the poise and mastery of a thorough tradesman. He found the door and let himself into a corridor, then felt his way forward, touching doors on each side and stopping at the end of the passage to consider. He had kept his turnings and advances straight in mind and knew exactly where he was in relation to the outer lines of the building. Also, he knew where he was according to a sketch which his employer had drawn for him. He listened attentively again, then grasped the knob of the door before him, drew it firmly toward him and turned it quickly to avoid any chance squeaks or quavers. With the same swift motion he shoved the door open and was standing inside the room at the end of the passage.

Straggling blue rays from a distant arc light were reflected from rows of bottles and scattered articles of glass and metal on benches about the wall, and by this uncertain light Blondie made out that he had entered a large room fitted up as a laboratory. From it there opened, at the side farthest from the strangler, a smaller room. Toward this he headed.

"This is going to be chicken-pie for me," he mumbled. "Ten thousand plunks—say, I'll buy a buzz-wagon 'n' I'll ride around below the Line 'n show 'em how to hit her up. I'll——"

Cheered, almost intoxicated, by thoughts of his own coming grandeur, Blondie was nevertheless alert enough to hear a stealthy sound near him; he whirled, jerking up one arm automatically to fend off a possible blow aimed at his head or face. At the same instant he became conscious of something tightening about his chest, binding one arm firmly to his side and biting and burning into his flesh till he cried out in agony. He realized that a noose had settled over him, and that he was being lifted from the floor.

Next moment the room was filled with blinding blue light and, as the strangler spun slowly about, like some great bird trussed before a fire, he saw a tall old man dancing about, in imminent danger of falling from a gallery near the ceiling.

"So ho, my bird—my fish—my dainty gazelle! I have you fast and safe at the first shot! Don't pluck at the rope, my beauty, for it's made of steel fibers, carefully tempered. I'll let you down after I've looked you over."

Blondie caught fleeting glimpses of him stalking along the gallery and down the narrow stairs at the end. Then the old man was standing beside him.

He was a tall, lean, white-haired old man, garbed in some nondescript night-garment in two pieces and bound about the waist with a doubled strand of cord. The strangler took in these details one at a time as he slowed to a standstill and hung, swaying. His captor was looking him over, with his head tipped back and his thin, high-bridged nose apparently ready to peck at Blondie, like an eagle's beak.

"What did you come here for?" the old man demanded suddenly.

Blondie stared at him with a sort of fascination that bound his tongue and held him almost hypnotized. The feeling had come over him that the old man was a dream; that this whole night of vicissitudes and misadventures was a series of very evil nightmares, caused by dope in his drink or too much free lunch.

A glint of anger kindled in the old man's eyes and he whirled about and strode away.

"He refuses to talk," the strangler heard him muttering. "Well, I have a cure for that—he shall experience the exquisite torture."

The words buzzed about in Blondie's throbbing head like a lonely bee in a barrel, leaving him just where he had been before—half suffocated by the binding weight about his chest and wholly stupefied by the totality of his surroundings. He saw the old man skim up the narrow stairs and appear directly over him on the gallery. He heard the clink of glass. Then his captor was peering over at him.

"Duck your head, my stubborn beauty!" he shrilled angrily. "If this stuff goes in your eyes, you will never again behold the light in this mortal existence! Duck—duck——"

Blondie had just sense enough to tip his head as far forward as the strain of his position would allow, and next moment something splashed against the exposed back of his neck. Instantly there seemed to be a superheated iron searing and corroding the tissues. Blondie threw his free hand back and another drop splashed upon that. When he brought it around with a wild sweep of his arm a purple blotch had appeared. It puffed up as the garroter looked, and stabbing pains shot through his arm and shoulder. He seemed to be in some infernal machine, with two white-hot poles scorching him. Reason was quickened by his extremity, and he realized that he must do something to appease the wrath of his mad captor, or he would be consumed alive by this terrible caustic.

"I beg!" he cried. "Come down and I'll talk—I didn't mean to keep mum, but you got me hoodooed!"

He heard the old man chuckling with satisfaction as he sped back along the gallery and down the steps, and desperately his mind went groping about for a means of still further pacifying him. If only he could entice him near enough to lay his one free hand on him! Blondie's jaws ground with sudden rage, and he felt the trammeled blood boiling up into his head. For a moment things turned red; then the old man was peering curiously into his face.

"Now then," he said briskly, "before I ask you to talk, let me warn you that you got off easily this time. The next—" he held up a long, slim, needle-like piece of steel which glistened in the blue light—"the next time we have any trouble, I will make just one thrust into you with this, my pipkin, and the haunts that have known you will know you no more forever. This needle is inoculated with the virus of anthrax, my infant—anthrax, malignant pustule, my beauty. You'll die a beautiful death—and one false answer will bring all this beatitude into your life!"

He paused, apparently to let the full terror of this statement sink into Blondie's consciousness. The strangler watched him fearfully, eying the infected needle for brief intervals, then letting his glance wander back—which it did of its own free will—to the white, lean, forbidding face of the mad scientist. He noticed that there was a patch of rust near the end of the needle, as if it had been dipped into some thick liquid and allowed to dry slowly. Blondie was densely ignorant on the subject of bacteriology, but something grimly assuring in the old man's presence convinced him that life for Blondie Doyle now hung by a veritable spider-web. If only he could lay hold of that long, lean neck——

"What did you come in here for?" the old man demanded.

"I came in for money or jewelry or whatever I could find," Blondie told him.

He felt the other's eyes drilling into the recesses of his being, but as he was merely lying now, not openly defying his captor, he felt that he was safe.

"Jewelry!" the old man scoffed. "Do I look like the kind to wear jewelry?"

"I never saw you afore," Blondie assured him earnestly. "You c'n believe me, boss, I wouldn't have set foot in this blasted house if I'd ha' knowed you was here. Let me down; I'll go away now—fer Gawd's sake let me down, afore I smothers with the weight of this noose!"

Most of this speech seemed to have passed over his companion's head. The old man stood with his lean chin in his hand, his elbow resting against the pit of his stomach. He was studying Blondie as he might have studied a strange crystal.

Gradually a film seemed to gather over his eyes and he swayed a little as he stood peering at his prisoner. Blondie felt his flesh quivering—a little more and he would topple within reach. Evidently the old man was going into some kind of fit. The strangler's arm knotted spasmodically and he stared straight at his captor.

Again the old man swayed toward him. Blondie hardly realized that his own body jerked to meet the other, as his free arm shot out. There was a scream as of some one awakening from an ugly dream, and that lean figure so near his own danced back, out of reach, then swooped down upon him. Blondie saw the old man's uplifted arm descend, felt the stab of the needle through his shoulder, and in his mad terror he struck out with all the power his position would allow him. His maul-like fist caught the scientist on the point of the chin and the old man toppled backward.

At the same instant the strangler's strained senses gave way, and felty blackness filled his mind and seemed to puff out into the room. He hadn't fainted; he, Blondie Doyle, was as conscious of himself as he had ever been in his life, but that isolating blackness seemed to have severed him by an infinite distance from the rest of the universe. Through this cloud he seemed to hear steps running, heard, as from another world, a door open. Then all was silent.

WHEN his eyes opened he was lying on the floor, staring up at a tube which gave out a blue-green radiance. He turned slightly and groaned—his whole body ached and throbbed, and he saw that some one had bandaged his hand, and felt a pad pressing against the back of his neck. He remembered the old man's terrible threat and the stab of the needle through his shoulder, and sat up suddenly with a scream.

Some one behind him spoke quietly:

"You'd best lie down for a while. You've been under quite a strain, and you've two bad acid burns. I've dressed them and you won't suffer much inconvenience from them. You've laid the Professor out as limp as he'll be at the last day—lie still while I see what I can do for him."

"But the needle!" Blondie raved. "The old bloat said it was poison, 'n' he got me in the shoulder afore I could land on him. Fer Gawd's sake, mister, do something fer me afore I swells up and busts!"

"His needle was as harmless as any other needle," the voice behind Blondie assured him. The speaker came over and stood above him—it was the young man of the Gladstone bag, serene and gentle as if he were playing dominoes. "He was always a little off on such things, but I sterilized all of these playthings of his before he barred me from the house. I'll cut the puncture open and clean it out with permanganate presently, but you do not need to worry."

Blondie turned as the other left him, rolling painfully until he could see the opposite side of the room. The old man was lying on a blanket, his white hair and colorless skin livid and ghastly in the blue light of the laboratory.

"Be—be you sure he ain't dead, boss?" Blondie demanded hoarsely, forgetting for a moment his own troubles.

"He's not dead, although you gave him a bad tumble."

For a few moments the strangler lay watching the pair. Gradually a tinge of color came into the old man's face, and his hands twitched. Then with a long sigh he turned his head and opened his eyes, staring for a while at the silent figure above him. Suddenly he sprang up and held out his hand joyously.

"Why, Danny, boy!" he cried, "I must have gone to sleep at my bench! Is it morning? Surely it is! Oh, my friend, my friend, I've had such dreams—but we've won, Danny! We've won the great prize! Listen! It was glucose that did it! Quite by accident—in desperation, you might say—I tried it. I meant to have sent you some of the gum as it came from the retort, but I must have fallen asleep."

The young man of the Gladstone bag smiled.

"You sent me the gum, Professor," he said gently. "And I came and found you—sleeping. I brought a man with me in case there was any little cleaning up to be done about the place. You have finished your work, my friend, and you must go for a long vacation."

He led the old man over to a chair and watched him sink into it.

IV

THE scent of dewy rose-gardens came to Blondie as he limped across the lawn and dropped down beside the hedge to put on his shoes. He paused to take from the inner pocket of his coat a letter, written on stiff linen paper and tucked into an open envelope. He had had it read to him, knew that it was addressed to the president of the Citizen's National Bank and that it authorized that gentleman to see that the accompanying check for ten thousand dollars was paid to the bearer without question.

For the first time in ten hours a grin spread itself over the strangler's face.

"He's the limit!" he growled, admiration and fear and wonder in his guttural tone. "Used me fer bait! Sent me ahead to keep the old bloat busy so's he could swipe the stuff hisself! 'N' he had it afore me 'n' old knobs come to the last round! Say, I earned the money all right, all right! The old oyster cooked me to a T where he got at it. But ain't I the doctor, though! Who'd ha' thought a crack like that on the mug would ha' jarred the cobwebs out'n his noodle? I ought to put in a bill fer curin' him!"

He folded the check and the letter and put them back carefully into his pocket, stooped, pulled one shoe into place, then drew out the envelope and repeated the process of examining its contents.

"In the name of ham, how'm I goin' to spend it?" he demanded slowly. "Say, Blondie,you're agoin' to travel. You're agoin' to see the world! Only first you'll get a buzz-wagon 'n' you'll make 'em all climb posts 'n hydrants down below the Line. You've got money, my boy—you're rich!"

He stuffed the envelope back and caught up the other shoe in a sudden frenzy; then he settled back with a groan.

"The bank don't open till ten o'clock," he reminded himself disconsolately.

With an Elephant Hunter in Africa

By Alfred Jordan

WHITE men had not cared to venture among the Wanderobos. Little was known of them, but this little was enough. It pertained to the tribe's wildness and its stealthy ways of fighting. On the rare occasions when a man of another tribe so far forgot himself in chasing game as to enter a Wanderobo forest he would find everything serene. There would be no unusual sound or movement. The stillness of the woods, broken only by the singing of birds and perhaps by the cries of animals, would cause him to believe that he was far from the haunts of man. But suddenly, seemingly from nowhere, would come a poisoned arrow; then another and another.

So it was that the forests and sweeping plains of the Wanderobo country on the highlands of German East Africa, six thousand feet above the sea, had been free from white invasion. It was ideal for hunting; every kind of game stalked its own prey in the scrub and belts of woodland; in the high grass elephants grazed quietly.

For me the elephants had a special interest, since at that time there were no German regulations to prevent a man from shooting a sufficient number of the animals on a single hunt to gain a small fortune from the ivory. I had been on a long cattle-trading trek among the Lumbwa, and was indulging in a bit of civilization in the towns along the Uganda Railway, but, growing tired of this, I made up my mind to go on an elephant hunt in Wanderobo land.

The project involved no great risk on my part, because, while the Wanderobos knew no other white man, they knew me. A year before I had come upon a band of them and had been able to win their favor by killing a lion which had carried off a Wanderobo girl. I had hunted with them and had learned their peculiar dialect, a rather musical jargon not unlike that of the Lumbwa, which I knew well.

With as little delay as possible after deciding upon the trip for ivory I left the railway and in ten days was in camp with twenty carriers on a grassy slope reaching away from the Magor River. In a dense wood a little way up the stream were some huts, made by bending the tops of saplings to the ground and covering them with grass and sticks, and so concealed in the underbrush as to be impossible to see until one was close upon them. These constituted a temporary Wanderobo village.

Because of the necessity of drawing to within twenty-five or thirty yards of game before they could kill it with their arrows, the Wanderobos were almost always hungry, so I fared forth each morning after the dew was off the grass to provide meat not only for my own men, but also for my savage friends, whom I expected to help me in my elephant hunt. Always on these tramps I searched for tracks of the big animals that were my special quest, and one forenoon I found them. The grass was much trampled and showed long streaks where the elephants had passed through.

When I entered the Wanderobo village that afternoon I sent my boy for the chief and informed him that many elephants were grazing along the Ronganda hills. This news caused excitement. The Wanderobos had not seen the tracks themselves because the Lumbwa, their deadly enemies, were known to hunt among these hills, and on this account my friends had kept away, but they were eager, of course, for information about the elephants. The *moran*, or warriors, clad in monkey-skins and armed with spears and arrows, gathered around me. To convince them absolutely of the presence of the herd I sent my boy back to camp for a saucer and a small tin of kerosene. When he had returned and had handed me these articles I drew back from the group of savages to perform a little witchcraft.

"Watch me," I exclaimed. "Into this saucer I am about to pour some water. I will touch the water with fire. If the elephants are still within our reach, the water will blaze up. If it does not blaze, the elephants have gone and we will have to be satisfied with poorer meat. We will see."

To the kerosene I then applied a match. When the Wanderobos, craning their necks, saw the flame, they raised their voices in a shout of joy. I motioned to the chief and witch-doctor, and we three withdrew to make our plans. It was arranged that four men start at dawn to locate the herd.

These runners came in the morning to my camp, and, shivering in my tent door, I gave them instructions and watched them disappear in the half-light around the hill. A little later all the other warriors gathered about my tent and we went on a hunt for zebra and antelope to provide the women and children with meat while the men were hunting elephants. Upon our return in the evening we found the runners already back, with the information that many elephants were feeding only eight miles away.

The Wanderobo warriors scattered to make preparations for the hunt, withdrawing into the thick bush, out of sight of the women and children, who, it is believed by this tribe, render the poison harmless if they come too near when it is being smeared upon the arrows. But the women were not idle. They were clutching handfuls of grass, throwing it into the air and chanting weirdly, "*Oesenie, Sirreon Engail*" (O great spirit, bring us fortune!)

THE news that elephants were to be hunted had been carried by runners to every Wanderobo village within twenty miles, and all night warriors kept coming in. In the morning, about one hundred and fifty of them had assembled, a strange collection of savages who jumped and yelled, half-crazy from eating, as part of the preparations for the killing, leaves of the *culie* or *morie*, a bush which produces an intoxicating juice. We delayed our start until forenoon, not intending to attack the elephants that day but to go into camp and be ready for the hunt at dawn.

Keeping a sharp lookout for wandering Lumbwa, we established ourselves, after a march of three hours, on a hillside and sent four men ahead to see where the herd was moving. I went out to procure meat for the big party, and in the course of the day dropped three antelopes and two waterbuck, a sufficient supply of food for all. Meanwhile the runners had returned and reported that there were about two hundred elephants in the herd, including many bulls, and that one of these, the leader, was very large, with tusks about six feet long. This meant nine feet when the ivory was taken out, since the lip covers about six inches and two feet and a half are in the head.

There was a feast that night. Around a huge fire the *moran* leaped and shouted, breaking the silence of the night with the doleful sound of the elephant-hunt song and appearing, with the flickering firelight shining upon their dark bodies, more like strange demons than human beings. At last they ceased the ceremonies. Quiet came, disturbed only by the occasional deep-throated growl of a lion stalking its prey, and now and then by the dismal cry of a hyena in the hills.

But after a while my rest was interrupted by a fresh outbreak of noise among the Wanderobos and I arose to see what the savages were about. They had thrown more fuel upon the fire, and Labersonie, the chief, tall and very old, stood in its light, with the *moran* gathered around him at attention. He was giving them a *shauri*, or talk, and I crept up quietly to listen.

"*El moran*, my warriors," the old chief was saying, "to-morrow we hunt the beast which gives us all we require, plenty of meat, food for our wives and children, a skin that makes good sandals, and ivory which we can sell for cows and oxen, and so have milk for our children when sickness comes. Now, the elephants must be slain only by men with strong arms and without fear. Perhaps some of you are afraid. If this is so, there is time to return to the women.

"Menutukie, this is your first time with the great animal of the forest. Your father was a hunter when he and I were *moran* together, but perhaps his son has not the courage of the warrior who is gone, who met his death through the terror of the bush, the buffalo. Perhaps you would like to climb a good tree, and watch how warriors kill the forest king."

Menutukie became greatly excited at these words, leaping into the air and wildly shaking his bow. I think there was a half smile on Labersonie's face, for he was in the habit of thus inspiring his warriors on the night before a foray, and evidently was a master of the art, as some of his *moran* became so frenzied that others had to hold them. I felt that the coming hunt would be a good one, but feared that the loud and continued shouting might alarm the elephants.

THE grass was wet and the air chilly when we started at sunrise toward the herd. Three *moran* had been sent out an hour earlier to ascertain whether the elephants had shifted during the night. The close proximity of the latter was indicated, after a tramp of an hour or so, by the sudden appearance of a rhino, which tore out of the bush and, maddened with fear of the elephants, the rhino's mortal enemy, was ready to attack and trample any moving thing in his way. Lumberingly but swiftly he was bearing down upon us, yet I did not want to take the chance of startling the elephants by a shot. This somewhat trying situation was relieved by some *moran*, who rushed at the rhino with their spears and succeeded in turning him to the right.

We reached the top of a high hill called the Soiat, and there we came upon the men who had gone out in advance. They pointed down the slope to a stretch of level ground where, just visible above the tall grass, I saw the big backs and heads of the grazing herd. The elephants were feeding slowly toward a belt of forest, in which, after their morning's grazing, they would lean against trunks of trees until the noonday heat had passed.

Knowing that the Wanderobos will never attack elephants in the open, I called a halt. We rested, and watched the herd disappear beneath the branches. Then we made ready for the onslaught. Each warrior streaked his face with a black powder prepared from burnt wood by the witch doctor, to render him invisible to the elephants. Old Labersonie sent some men across the level to the edge of the forest where, I was told, two saplings would be bent together into an arch through which everybody must pass in order to please Engai, the spirit.

We had arranged that two companies of twenty men each should take positions on either side of the elephants; that I and twenty men should line up where the animals were likely to leave the forest, and that the remainder of the party should circle around the herd and drive it toward us. We separated and quickly took our stations.

For a while we waited. Then I heard a faint crashing, steadily becoming louder. In a moment I could distinguish the different sounds—the cracking of small trees, the roars of the bulls, the shrill cries of the cows, the yelling of the savages. Suddenly the elephants broke into sight, ears extended and trunks uplifted. They came ponderously but rapidly and directly toward us. I knew that I should have to do good shooting to escape alive from the stampede, and I lost no time, the reports of my rifle promptly adding to the din of yells and roars. At the first shot I dropped a big bull, but still they came on. I shot another and then another of the leaders of the herd, but those behind swerved round the prostrate ones, and still came swinging on, frenzied by the savage cries behind them.

I thought they would never turn, and saw myself trampled beneath their feet, but suddenly a big bull, waving his trunk like a signal, swerved to the left. The mob followed, and for a moment we were safe.

"Mongaso! Mongaso!" the men of my party shouted. This was their name for me, but I had no ears for it just then, being too intent on a bull which had left the herd and was still bearing down upon us. My first shot hit him in the trunk and he did not stop. I fired again. The bullet reached the mark this time and the great beast swayed and sank.

Meanwhile the warriors who had driven the herd out of the forest had jumped in among them. They were shooting arrows in all directions, dodging, eluding the big bodies almost by inches. It looked as if their superstition about the black powder with which they streaked their faces must be correct, for no other men could have mingled in that stampede and come out alive. But in a moment their stock of arrows was exhausted and they crouched in the grass as the mob thundered past them.

Now they gathered round me, shouting my name again and telling of the number of elephants killed, and together we started to search for bodies in the grass. In each there were numerous arrows and some showed wounds where imbedded arrows had been pulled out by the elephants themselves with their trunks.

The chief sent runners to bring the women and children, and gave orders to cut up the meat for a big feast. When the final tally of dead elephants was made I found that they numbered eighteen bulls and twelve cows.

The next day at camp I sent my men back for the ivory. The largest pair of tusks weighed two hundred and ninety-one pounds, and altogether I had about eighteen hundred pounds of ivory, which, at the rate of about three dollars a pound, meant that I should realize a substantial profit when I reached the trading-posts along the Uganda Railway.

II

MY NEXT elephant hunt was for pleasure, although not so much for my own pleasure as that of a gentleman from the Netherlands whom I happened to meet at the outpost of Ikona, in German East Africa, and who had plenty of money and desired excitement.

We started with a good outfit and a few carriers. My Dutch friend, having never before been on a real hunt in the bush, found the march over the hills and plains, through scrub and forest, somewhat laborious, but he was game enough, and we arrived in six days at the beautiful Alama River. Here we camped, and after resting for a day, started early in the morning to meet the elephants.

It was not long before we came upon the first detachment of the herd. About one hundred bulls, cows, and calves were grazing in the elephant grass. My companion, who had talked bravely about what he would do with his rifle when he saw an elephant, now began to ask questions about the safety of shooting into the herd. I paid no attention to him, being too busy aiming at a fine bull, but the Dutchman's nervousness may have interfered with the accuracy of my own shot. At all events it was a poor one and the elephant was merely wounded. At the sound of the shot the others of the mob raised their heads in quick alarm and closed quickly around the wounded bull. Now the stampede began. With trunks and tails raised, the elephants swerved away from us.

I had no opportunity to get another good shot, but my Dutch companion was more courageous now and was keen to continue the hunt. We had moved along a slope for about two miles when I perceived, by the waving of the grass, that we were close to another herd. They did not get our wind, and I was able to creep up close, the Dutchman following with hesitating steps.

A big bull happened to be nearer than

any of the others, and, kneeling for careful aim, I fired. Once more, for some reason my aim was bad. The bull lifted his trunk in astonishment, evidently hit but not much hurt. Then he swung around and came rushing toward us, an impressive spectacle, the biggest animal of the bush in rage. There was something fine about his onrush, but it evidently was not to the liking of the Dutchman, for he flung my .500 express rifle to the ground—a proceeding which annoyed me greatly—and took to his heels.

The charge of the bull straight toward me was so unexpected that I had no time for further shooting. The raging beast towered above me, his trunk raised like a huge club, his driving tusks and small eyes, which seemed to blaze with fury, making a picture of violent death which is still vivid in my memory. In desperation I threw myself to one side and to the ground

Then I began to crawl. So heavy was the grass that rapid movement was impossible, and after forcing myself along for a few yards on my hands and knees, I lay still, hardly breathing. Thrashing about, trampling the grass, waving his trunk and bellowing loudly, the bull came so close that I could have hit his big legs with a stick. I felt that this was my last hunt—a step or two in my direction would have brought his feet upon my body, and I knew that if he should scent me it would be the end.

But miracles, I am glad to be able to say, sometimes happen. The wind favored me and I was concealed completely in the grass. With a movement as sudden as his onrush, the bull swung around and went crashing back toward the herd. Rising, I pushed my way back to where I had been forced to drop my rifle in my flight on hands and knees and, aiming quickly, took a shot at the retreating beast, hoping that this would cause him to swing again so that I could hit him in the head. The bullet struck him in the flank, but only served to hasten him on his way.

I now sat down to get my breath and to wipe the perspiration from my fevered brow, and in a few moments I saw the round face of the Dutchman peering at me cautiously through the grass. Needing a vent for my wrought-up feelings, I promptly poured a hot volley of words into my companion for casting away my cherished rifle and taking to his heels. To tell the truth, however, I did not blame him much. He explained, half humorously, that he had not been able to control the motions of his legs, and said that he did not believe he could have faced the charge of that elephant for a thousand pounds. "The big bull come so quick!" he exclaimed.

But the flush of the hunt was now upon him and, with protestations that the next time he would try to stand his ground, he readily agreed to follow the herd with me. So we started off again and after about a mile of hard going through the thick undergrowth once more saw the elephant mob; the animals were grazing on a long slope just above us.

A short distance to our right was a mass of tangled bushes, which I knew marked a swamp. We stole up slowly and quietly to get within easy gunshot of our quarry, but they must have got our wind, for suddenly each trunk was thrown up, almost with the precision of soldiers handling arms. Then, all together, the mob stampeded and came thundering down the slope, head-on toward us, the bulls in advance as usual, and the cows hurrying along their calves by pushing and half lifting the small elephants with their tusks. Only for an instant I watched the spectacle. I knew that this stampede could not be stopped by bullets—there were too many elephants and they were charging too directly.

"Come on! Come on!" I shouted to the Dutchman. "We'll have to run for it. Follow me!"

I made for the swamp, with my friend —clutching the rifle desperately this time— bringing up the rear in excellent form. Once he stumbled and I thought for an instant that our race was finished, but he recovered himself somehow and we waded on. The grass being only about up to our armpits, we could see all too vividly the advancing mob. What was more important, the elephants could see us, and the bulls in front had their trunks suspended for blows that would knock us many feet if we could not reach the refuge of the swamp before the beasts reached us.

I was beginning to despair of this. We had struck a rise in the ground which made our progress slower. With the tangled grass about our feet it was like a flight in a nightmare, when one tries to run and can not, but in a moment the ground sloped down again and we made more speed. The bellowings of the elephants had become a roar when we finally reached the marsh, plunged into the mud and water, and here, up to our waists in ooze, watched the mob go careering by. Not until the last extended tail had disappeared did we drag ourselves out and begin our weary tramp back to camp.

The cook had an excellent supper almost ready, and, after we had done it ample justice, the gentleman from the Netherlands, smoking his pipe in front of the tent in the cool and quiet evening of the highland wilderness, expressed an opinion to the effect that an elephant hunt was a great experience but that one was sufficient for a lifetime.

III

AFTER conveying my friend safely back to the post of the German Government at Ikona, I took another peep at civilization in the towns along the railroad and then looked about for a real huntsman to accompany me on an expedition for ivory for the market.

I found my man. He was a big Englishman, an ex-member of the King's Guards and a soldier of fortune who was ready for adventure of any kind. We started from old Kisumu, a trading-post on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza. Our vessel was an Arab *dhow* and our fellow passengers a choice collection of Arabs, East Indians and Swahalis, all bound across the lake to hunt and trade.

Buffeted by adverse winds, we were ten days on the big inland sea of Africa and the supply of provisions began to run low. For the purpose of stocking up again the old Arab captain cast anchor off the island of Lusinga and signaled to the natives to send out canoes, but for some reason the latter paid no attention. Driven by necessity, a number of Swahalis plunged off the *dhow* to swim ashore, all of them reaching it in safety except the last, who, among the reeds, uttered a frenzied shriek. What this meant we knew only too well—a crocodile had seized the swimmer. With a long knife in his mouth, an Arab jumped overboard to the rescue—a brave deed, but unfortunately the rescuer was too late.

With our equipment wet from incessant rains we at last landed at Shirati, hired some sixty native carriers and pushed on without delay. We passed through Ikona, where I had met the huntsman from the Netherlands, and camped some miles farther on, near a Wasire village, which was surrounded by a high cactus hedge to keep off lions, especially plentiful in this locality.

Only for a day we tarried here, pushing on in the gray light of dawn. Lions prowled around us, doing good service in keeping our carriers close up with us, and we shot a lion and a lioness, obtaining two fine skins. In addition, my partner dropped a rhino which had caused the porters to cast down their loads and speed for the nearest mimosa trees.

In four days we came upon the fresh spoor of elephants—the ground almost bare of grass, and the trees stripped clean of bark. We camped near a pool of water to which the elephants evidently came to drink, and the same morning found the herd. It was divided into three mobs, the biggest numbering about one hundred animals, and the other two about fifty each. The large mob was made up chiefly of cows and calves, with only eight or ten bulls among them, but these were all good tuskers. The second mob were mostly young bulls with tusks weighing under fifty pounds. The third detachment was composed of full-grown bulls. It was the one we wanted.

The animals were facing us, flapping their ears busily to keep off the flies, and incidentally giving us a fine view of their ivory. My partner and I each selected a fine bull, took aim, and mine dropped with a shot through the head. My partner, however, was not so lucky. He hit only the trunk, the elephant gave vent to a squeal of pain and rage; the others threw up their trunks with the same soldier-like precision that I had noticed when hunting with the Dutchman, and took flight. We pursued them, firing as we went, and passing a young bull which was quite dead, we came up with two big ones groggy from wounds, dropped them and pushed on.

Long shadows were beginning to reach eastward from the hills when we remembered that we had gone since early morning without food or water. Estimating the camp to be about fifteen miles behind us, I proposed that we try to refresh ourselves with sleep and then look for a spring—a quest of more importance than any hunt for ivory, since water was not easy to find on these semi-arid highlands, and both of us had become extremely thirsty. But my partner, being keen to get back to camp, would not listen to my suggestion.

After about nine miles of one of the hardest tramps of my life we lighted a fire and threw ourselves on the ground in utter weariness. I felt my tongue thickening from thirst. Sleep or rest being impossible, I climbed a rise to obtain a view of the country in the starlight. At a great distance I made out a faint glow. Could it be our camp? Descending the hill at once, I roused my partner from a half stupor. Lighting firebrands as a safe-guard against some hungry lion or leopard that might feel inclined to leap upon us in the darkness, we resumed the weary tramp. For an hour or so we feared that the glow ahead was from a grass fire started by wandering savages, but finally we could make out dark forms passing to and fro against the light, and knew that it was our own fire and that the boys were waiting for us.

All the next day we lounged about the camp while our carriers brought in the ivory, but the following morning we again took up the pursuit of the elephant herd. For two weeks we hovered about it, dropping a bull here and there, and killing about twenty lions and leopards for their skins. After obtaining the ivory from eighteen bull elephants and eight cows, we trekked back to Shirati, sold the ivory to the traders and counted up our profits.

A statement as to these will convey an idea of the commercial side of ivory hunting. The expenses must first be reckoned. On the three months' trip in question these were as follows:

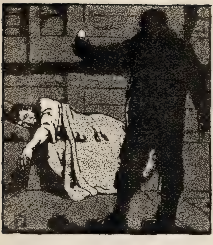
The German Government tax of 100 rupees ($33.33) on each elephant shot	2,600	Rupees.
Wages of 55 porters at 3 rupees a month for three months	495	"
Wages of cook at 10 rupees a month	30	"
Wages of two gunbearers at 5 rupees a month	30	"
Backsheesh	295	"
Provisions	300	Rupees.
Ammunition	150	"
Presents to natives	60	"
Tax on one rhino and two buffalo at 30 rupees each	90	"
Tax on fifty antelopes at 3 rupees each	150	"
Tax on fifteen gazelles at one rupee each	15	"
Total	4,215	Rupees. ($1,264.50)

The profits were:

Ivory of 18 bull elephants	12,240	Rupees.
Ivory of 8 cows	2,160	"
Government bounty on 9 lions at 20 rupees each	180	"
Bounty on 9 leopards at 10 rupees each	90	"
Proceeds from sale of 9 lionskins	180	"
Proceeds from sale of 9 leopardskins	90	"
	14,940	Rupees.
Less Expense	4,215	"
Net Profit	10,725	Rupees ($3,217.50)

It will be seen from this that the monetary returns from an elephant hunt of three months were not inconsiderable, but such profits can be realized no more from ivory hunting in East Africa. Within a year both the British and German Governments have awakened to the danger of the extinction of the elephants within their domains and have made regulations forbidding the shooting by a single hunter of more than two elephants a year.

But the traveler can still see an occasional lion from the car windows on the Uganda Railway, and leopards invade the henhouses of the farmers. With immense reaches of virgin territory, the country will remain for a long time to come a paradise for hunters of big game.



The Troth

By Newton A. Fuessle

TROTHS, under the cold heaven of the North, are usually between men. It is the great love of man for man which obtains, born as it is out of common travail and endless battle with the ice-god. And when it comes to pass that a man, a strong man, spends wakeful nights in musing on the sound of a girlish laugh, the touch of a hand, the depth of an eye, there is a struggle—and a tale to be told.

Two men, one bending over a ledger and the other over a snow-shoe he was webbing, were sitting on opposite sides of a little cabin. It was the Sergeant's cabin, twenty miles out of Dawson on the great Linderman trail. They were in the Queen's Service, in the North, and the year was ninety-nine. These things mean much to those who know.

The Sergeant, bending over the book which lay across his knees, was angry. Anger peered as plainly from the dark seams of his face as it showed in the curl of his close-cropped iron-gray mustache and in the song of the pen that traveled with staccato jerks across the wide page.

He was a Scotchman, dour and curt, exiled for twenty years at an obscure station among the headwaters of the Mackenzie, and now the terror of those who came, lawless and gold-mad, into Alaska. In the Queen's books at home he was John McFergus, but here men called him Mac. He was known in every mining-camp from Fort Selkirk to Dawson, and criminals, when they heard his name, started with instinctive fear. McFergus was surly of speech and manner, but the young man, as he glanced up occasionally from his work to steal a furtive look at the other's face, realized for the first time how much he loved him.

Presently the Sergeant grunted, and the other, looking up, met the boring steel of a pair of eyes. "So you're goin', eh?" said McFergus, not unkindly. "How soon?" he added after a moment.

"In a week, I expect," returned the other, lowering his gaze.

The Scotchman's pen resumed its song. A minute passed. Then he continued: "I can't understand it, Charlie—no, I don't seem to see it at all. But I guess it's because it's so different with me."

There was a break in the usual reserve of the Sergeant. He seldom spoke to his subordinates at any length, save to give instructions. "I've seen a lot of them just like you—chaps that would quit all kinds of jobs fer women. But hang it, Charlie, this is different. You're in the Service, man, in the Service—the Queen's Service—and you're with me, with me, McFergus—my right-hand man! I reckon there's a hundred chaps up to Dawson right now who'd sell their souls to the devil in a second fer the job you're throwin' away. An' as game a lot as ever pulled a trigger."

McFergus paused. Charlie Graves said never a word. Once more the pen began its song, and the young man, studying the wrinkles in the other's boot, fell to musing. His thoughts traveled back past his *cache*, past Lost River, and thence down to Jean Valesque's little road-house. She would be waiting, the girl at the road-house—Jean's daughter. He could see her now—the lips, the eyes, the hair, the hands.

Another week and he would join her. He had given his promise. He had sealed the troth with a kiss.

"Women," resumed Mac presently, "women, and in the North at that—ye wouldn't leave the North, would ye? Think of it, man! Cooped up in a road-house, afraid to hit the trail—you might not come back, she'll say. There'll be kids an' a terrible hankering fer the trail, fer the dogs, fer a record run through a blizzard, fer a fight. Curse you, boy! can't you see? I've talked to a lot of them. It'll be worse for you—lots worse. You've been used to it all the time—to the trail, to an occasional scrap, to the worst men in Alaska, to the drag of the snow-shoes—and then a rest, a warm, warm bunk, an' good grub a-plenty. But I reckon it's no use. Who is she? Good? Straight?"

"You're —— right, Mac," returned the young man gravely.

There was a noise outside the cabin; the door opened. It was Pierre, the Indian runner from the Fort. His face was stiff with the cold; he grunted stolidly as he produced a piece of crumpled paper.

"I guess something's the matter," muttered McFergus as he surveyed the Indian. "Kind of winded, eh? You must 'a' piked some!"

Presently the Sergeant gave a long-drawn whistle. "It's from the old man," he said, speaking to Graves. "Red Curtis has turned up. He's hidin' in Fetzger's cabin, just a piece below our *cache*. 'Get him alive or dead,' says the old man. 'Send Graves.' " The Sergeant paused. Through his yellow teeth came a reflective oath. Then he went on: "There's a big reward up, ain't there? Along in the thousands. Wait, there's *two* rewards up—one for Red an' one for that side-kicker of his, Bond."

Again the Sergeant's thumb followed the lines of the note as he perused it once more; and as he read he swore. "You're goin' to quit in a week, eh?" he went on. "Fetzger's shanty is eighty miles up the north trail. Let's see; you ought to be back inside of five days. That'll give you two days to rest up."

Charlie Graves sat silent; a half-smile played around the corners of his mouth. "Send Graves" was the word from the Fort. It would be his last capture, his last fight in the Queen's Service, he reflected—his last and his greatest. If he succeeded, his name would live long in the Yukon country, for on Red Curtis's head there long had been a price.

Curtis was a claim-jumper, murderer, renegade; talked of from Seattle to Behring Straits, and demi-god in the eyes of the lawless; gambling, stealing, killing—with his daring reenforced by luck which was the marvel of all Alaska; eluding the police with patient vigilance; turning up in Dawson when reported at bay in Thief River; and justice, slow, but quite as patient, trailed him like a hound.

"Well?" queried McFergus.

"I'm on," said Graves, rising.

* * *

GRAVES urged his dog-team into the trail and swung along behind his sledge. His face, fringed with the flaps of his great *parka* cap, wore a happy look, and his thoughts, speeding now onward to Fetzger's cabin and now along the back trail to the little road-house and a girl, mingled joy with sorrow, for this was his last assignment in the Service. He called to his dogs and sent the tip of his long lash stinging among them. And the animals knew from the bite of the rawhide that they must make a record run.

The trail was well packed and hard; the load on the sledge was trifling, for Graves traveled with swiftness; and the runners speeding over the ice-veneer of the trail, gave forth a merry sound like the singing voice of a cutlass. He could reach the shanty by the next evening.

Reflecting on the past and looking forward into the future, the man felt strange misgivings at conflict under his arctic shirt. He fell to musing on the words of McFergus. Perhaps Mac was right after all. Perhaps his love for the girl would not prove stronger than his passion for the trail, for active service. His love had been threefold, embracing McFergus, the capture of criminals, and trials of endurance.

A year ago he would have scoffed at any other love. But that was before Jean Vaiesque had sent to the States for his daughter. McFergus had never loved, nor the old man at the Fort, nor the rest. That was why they laughed their little, quizzical, angering laughs when they heard. Men in Alaska soon forget what a woman is. They see only the creatures in the concert-halls and gambling-houses of Dawson—females, but not feminine. Mac had asked with a grin if the girl were good, whether she were straight, reflected Graves. He had told him with an oath that she was. Instinct told him that she was good, the instinct he had brought from the South.

Twilight, falling swiftly, closed in upon the short day. There was a menace in the wind that came in angry crescendo out of the north, and Graves drew his *parka* cap closer as the sting of driving snow-flakes cut his features. Spring was coming on; he had not looked for a storm. But to stop meant deeper snow in the morning, and slower going—and Charlie Graves must travel fast.

The long night wore on. By morning the team was staggering through great drifts, making slow headway and giving little desperate, wearied, worn-out yelps. The driver calculated that forty miles of the trail lay behind. Evening would see them at the cabin, and then—a smile fought with the cold that numbed his features, and in his heart was gladness. The snow on the trail was getting deeper, and the wind stung like a needle as it blew. In the distance clouds of snow raced madly. Instinct kept the dogs in the trail, and beside it snow-shrouded pines, towering high and specter-like, seemed to nag at the procession as it staggered onward.

Graves, fighting fatigue, felt strange thoughts harassing him. His mind kept wandering back to the girl, Jean Valesque's daughter. In a week he would join her, he panted, and the small smile struggled once more with his stiffened lips. Came presently the face of McFergus, displacing the other. And now he saw them side by side, both beckoning him, both calling. He had been with Mac for many years, and knew that the old man loved him. Then there came another thought as he swung wearily from foot to foot. He was breaking the greatest tie in all the North—the bond which ties the strong. He was breaking the troth of men.

TOWARD evening the wind howled out of the north like an animal, but the play of the lash-tip kept trace and harness taut. All day Graves had fought the weariness which dragged behind Knowing that if he faltered, the malamoots would bolt, or lie down to die in their weariness. All day the vision of Red Curtis hovered before him—with blue-gray eyes, the curl of cunning lips, the arrogant chin, the long red hair, a handsome face. Graves, intent on the vision, forgot ache of muscle and fatigue of mind.

Soon there came an appalling slowness of limb to answer the demands of the tyrant will. The reindeer thongs of his snow-shoes, cutting his swollen feet, sent sharp surges of pain throbbing through them. Sometimes the dogs would fall in the deep drifts, their feet painfully trapped in the harness, and then the driver would stumble forward to their aid, cursing them. He passed the *cache* without stopping for food. It was a race with cold and weakness. All day the fear of losing urged him on. Relentless pains bored his feet and lash-arm, and latterly there came a mind-weariness that was far worse than pain of body.

At last Graves' eye discerned a black speck far off across the white, and slowly the speck grew, blurring intermittently as snow-clouds swept the landscape. It was Fetzger's cabin. There was a sudden marshaling of strength, and Graves, forgetful of weariness, was glad with the prospect of battle.

Graves swore when he stopped at the door of the cabin. His oath was fervent, thanksgiving, prayerful, coming from the heart. The words came slowly; came with a strange snarl, half human, half bestial, through closed teeth and running slaver. The man-flame in Graves was flickering low. Men in Alaska are not always human. When the trail is long, they become beasts.

The door of the shanty swung open without noise at Graves' touch. It was almost dark, and Graves, fumbling for a match, shivered with the fear that Red Curtis might be gone. The match sputtered and then flamed bright. A man lay on the bunk sleeping. He stood for a second, hesitating, regarding him in the dim light—the murderer, the renegade, the prey of justice, but the under dog. Graves was conscious of the combat within him, as though he were watching it from a distance. It was a conflict between Beast and Man.

Only a second, and he was resolved.

"Curtis!" he cried sharply.

There was a movement on the bunk, a break in the slow rhythm of the breathing.

"Curtis!" he called again, and added after a pause: "It's Graves—of the Queen's Service!"

The eyes opened and fell upon the face of

Graves, just as the match, flickering in a draft from the door, went out. But Curtis had seen the face and recognized it. Graves, standing in the darkness, heard a muffled cry, unhuman, like the noise of an animal. Neither man could see, but the lust of battle calls upon instinct in places where vision fails; and as the man leaped from the bunk Graves sprang forward to meet him. There was the clutch of straining hands, the gasp of quick intakes of breath, the stamp of pawing feet upon the floor, and then the snap of steel as the handcuffs closed with a click over the wrists.

And now Graves collapsed in a faint across the renegade, for even the beast-flame was flickering low. Again and again he tried to rise, and to ward off the kicks of his handcuffed prisoner. At length the flame flared brighter. Staggering to his feet, Charlie Graves of the Queen's Service struck a match, and then, with sheer tyranny of will, forced his tired hands to bind the prisoner with strips of raw-hide.

IT WAS daylight when Graves opened his eyes. Consciousness of bodily pain and soreness of joints brought recollection, and his eyes sought the figure on the floor. Curtis was gazing at him out of strange, frightened, bloodshot eyes. At length words came faltering through bloodless lips. "I guess I've got it, Graves," he began with a little laugh.

The other understood and, bending over the shaking figure, raised the lips. The gums were livid, with great swollen blotches fringing the teeth. "My God!" he exclaimed.

"Scurvy, eh?" queried Red Curtis.

"I reckon it is, all right," returned the other quietly.

"Felt it comin' on," said Curtis. "Pains in the back an' legs—kind of all in fer about a week. That's why I couldn't mix it up — When the —— was it? Last night? No, the night before. Say, got any potatoes or lemons?"

"Nothing but dried salmon," returned Graves. "The Sergeant's shanty is eighty miles back," he added.

"Never mind," said the other. "It's gone too far anyhow. I guess Red Curtis has led you fellers your last chase. But say, Graves, I was a heller while I lasted, wasn't I? What did they think about me back there?"

Graves was silent. There was something in the claim-jumper's coolness that compelled admiration. After a while he returned, "'Alive or dead' was the word." The gray eyes of the dying man were fixed hungrily on the other's lips as they shaped themselves for the words; while the look of old-time hauteur dominated the pinched features.

There was another pause, longer than before. Presently Curtis spoke. "Say, Graves, you won't leave me here to die all alone, will you? It's been a holy fright the last week. I was glad you came, —— glad. You won't go away, will you, Charlie?"

Charlie Graves of the Queen's Service started. A strange look had glimmered forth from the gray eyes, and the inner pattern of the famous criminal, which the other was busy piecing out, underwent rapid changes. He looked away. Queer emotions checked him. He sat repeating the words: "You won't go away, will you, Charlie?"—repeating them slowly, hardly comprehending. It took a long while for their meaning to become patent.

All the while the sunken eyes were fixed on him; he knew, but he dared not meet them. The girl came into Graves' mind—the girl back at Jean Valesque's road-house. She would be waiting for him; the time was near. He had promised, had given his troth, had sealed it with a kiss. He thought of old Valesque and of Mac. Mac would be waiting. In all these years his right-hand man had never failed him, had never failed to return to the cabin at the appointed time. And, besides, there was little salmon left in the canvas bag; and the *cache* was twenty miles away. Red Curtis might die in an hour, to-day, to-morrow—but, again, he might linger for a week. Men with scurvy die like cats. Graves knew; he had kept death-vigils before. And the promise—the troth! No—he could not stay. But this was Curtis—Red Curtis! This was different. Surely he would die soon—to-day perhaps. "Curtis," he mused, "Red Curtis, murderer, claim-jumper, renegade, the greatest in all Alaska, matchless!"

Presently Graves muttered: "I reckon I can stick around, Red, old man."

Then began a lonesome vigil beside the dying man. Graves placed him upon the bunk on one side of the shanty, and sat gazing at the wall of the cabin. A day passed; another dragged itself slowly by. Two of the malamoots were dead, and Graves cut the rest out of harness and told them to *mush*. In ten hours they would reach McFergus's cabin. Graves could not see them die, and there was not enough grub for them and him. The dogs bolted up the back trail, and Graves returned to the death-watch.

Sometimes, looking up, he would catch the eyes of the other. The two seldom spoke. Men are silent when they wait for death. Graves nibbled sparingly at the thin strips of salmon that remained, calculating how long they and the man on the bunk would last. Sometimes the man with the scurvy would wander off into delirium, laughing wildly, talking of fights and poker-games and women. Then would come a lucid interval, and now these last were far apart. When they came he would ask the watcher if he were there, begging him not to go away.

Graves, almost famished, maddened by the talk of the dying man and by the eyes that stared and stared, felt his own mind wander. Days passed, dragging themselves out slowly to interminable length until he lost all count of them, and still the man on the bunk lived and talked and laughed and stared. Now he could stay no longer, Graves often told himself, for the girl was waiting; and then Curtis would beg him with tears and trembling not to leave him. And he stayed.

As Graves sat cowering in a corner of the cabin he thought and thought. It came back to him—the face of the Sergeant, the look in his eyes when he told him he was going to quit the Service. And then Curtis would laugh deliriously from the bunk, and the keeper of the long vigil prayed that he would die, and cursed him for living.

Once there came a day when Curtis talked for hours of Dawson City with its poker, its faro, its whisky, its women. He raved about a girl, fondling the air with ghastly words of affection, words that came uncertain and muffled from black lips, words that made Graves' blood run cold. He called her by name, and tears rolled down his cheeks as he called. Graves leaned forward listening intently, but the delirious words were only half-formed, and, though he bent over the dying figure until his ear almost touched the lips, he listened vainly.

Sometimes Curtis would raise himself on his elbow, gesticulate wildly, and demand her picture; and Graves, himself half delirious and frightened into momentary consciousness by the unearthly yells and eyes, shivering with a great fear, could only stare in frightened fascination while the other fumbled at the wall of the cabin.

A new light came at length into the eyes of the criminal, and Graves knew that this day would be his last. He beckoned Graves to his side, while whispered words dribbled weakly from his wasted lips. A thin hand stole falteringly across the front of his heavy Winter shirt. "It's here, it's here," he muttered faintly. After a while the hand drew out of the bosom a little cardboard. The lips moved, but there was no sound, for death had come.

Graves peered at the picture on the cardboard, trembling as he looked. He knew the eyes, the lips, the hair. It was the girl at Jean Valesque's road-house!

A mighty surge of pain, gathering at Graves' heart, swept his frame and sang through his half-closed teeth like a tempest. Seizing the picture, he crushed it between his fingers.

"My God, my God!" he moaned, and out of his eyes burned slowly the hottest of tears. "I told Mac she was straight—told him she was good!"

He remembered now how Mac and the rest had smiled whenever he had spoken of her. Swiftly knotting the thongs of his snow-shoes, he swung into the back trail, while the sun, casting a cold glamour upon the snows, chilled him like a poison.

TWO men, one tossing in half delirium, and the other treading very softly whenever he had to cross the room, were listening to the patient tick of the little clock on the shelf. So it had been for many days. Sometimes the Sergeant would gaze long and anxiously while dream-images indexed themselves on the white face. Often, too, the figure would try vainly to raise itself and would break into unintelligible combinations of words. Latterly this had happened at much longer intervals, until one day when Charlie Graves opened his eyes the strange look was gone.

"Hello, Mac!" came to the hungry ears of the old Scotchman.

"Charlie!" he returned, laying his great hand on the other's.

"What day is it?"

"Friday."

"Then you found me yesterday?"

"Two weeks ago yesterday," returned the Sergeant. "After it was time for you to blow back, I hiked down the trail every day, tryin' to spot you. The seventh day I stumbled across you, stickin' out of a drift. I reckoned for a while that you'd sure pass 'em in. A feller came past yesterday an' brought word about Red. I guess the reward's yours, all right."

A smile hovered faintly on Graves' lips, but left them suddenly when the Sergeant went on: "You've got to get well quick now. Old Valesque's girl is waitin' fer you."

The Sergeant paused, not noting the other's change of expression. After a moment he resumed: "An' I want to take back the things I said about her. It was pretty low-down of me. I made some wild guesses when I said 'em, an' I hadn't ought to done it, but I hated to lose ye. I learned different later on. She's the gamest there is. But wait till I tell you.

"While you was hikin' down to Fetzger's shack on a hunt fer Red, who should turn up in these parts but his side-kicker, Bob Bond. He stopped for a snack back there at the road-house. Old man Valesque had run up to Dawson, an' the girl was there alone. She knew him in a second. The young devil tried to love her up, and the girl springs a game that wins me over in a second. She jerked out a gun, an' with the powder-devil starin' straight at Bond, she asks him to turn his back to her or get bit. Bond was wise an' done as he was told. In a second she has her snow-shoes on.

"'Now,' she says, 'you *mush!* An' never mind rubberin' around. I'm here, all right, comin' right along. If you try to turn your noodle this way, the shootin'-iron talks. Forward, hike!'

"Late that night they landed here, her an' Bond. The next day the runner from the Fort blowed in, an' took Brother Bond along. There's a thousand bones in it for your girl."

During McFergus's recital, Charlie Graves lay silent, with stoic cast of countenance. McFergus had calculated that his story would set the young man on fire. He had been treasuring it impatiently until this day.

"Well," the Sergeant demanded, puzzled and disappointed, "ain't you satisfied? Eh? What do you want, anyhow? I tell you she's the gamest there is—you can take that for a tip. If you marry her, you won't have to quit the Service, man."

And still the young man was silent. The picture he had destroyed confronted him. Also, he could hear the delirious love-phrases as they fell weakly from the lips of Red Curtis. Then: "Did she say anything —the girl?"

"Say anything!" returned the Scotchman. "What could she say? I jollied her right, about a sartain young officer in the Queen's Service, an' she blushed real pretty. She was mighty tickled about the way she got Bond—said you'd be awful glad. Don't you tumble? She did it for you—for you! Sabe?"

"Did she say so?" questioned the man on the bunk.

"Say so!" roared the Sergeant. "Do I have to have an iceberg fall my way? With the exception of a little personal grudge she owed the Bond-Curtis combination, it was for you—to show you she was a game one, like the married wife of a Queen's Service man ought to be."

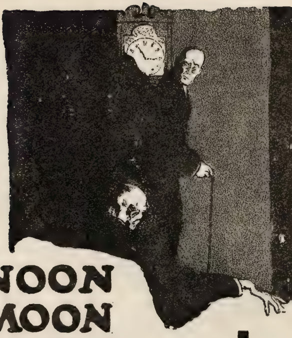
"Did she know Curtis?" demanded Graves.

"The infernal red-head stopped at the old man's road-house a year ago an' claim-jumped a picture of hers that was settin' on a shelf. It got her hot. It was the only one she had."

THE clock in the cabin had ticked out a day, three days, a week. Graves had recovered rapidly, hearing all day, in fancy, the ripple of a girl's laughter, and the quiet crooning of a voice. At night he saw the lines and curves and colors of her face. And all the while his heart beat loudly.

And now the clock, ticking impatiently, had measured the lapse of a fortnight. As Charlie Graves stood knotting the thongs of his snow-shoes, McFergus stood silently by. "You've made the luckiest strike in all Alasky," said the old man, "an' you won't have to quit the Service either," he added.

Graves strode out into the snows. He was keeping his double troth. And his path lay toward the light that hung shimmering in the south.



IN THE NOON OF THE MOON

by Horace Hazeltine

HALF hidden in the dusky shadows of the great room's farthest corner, the tall, lean, white-haired old gentleman, stooping, swung feebly flush the heavy metal door of the small fire-proof safe and secured it by a twirl of its nickeled knob. The bent, shrunken figure in the shabby leather armchair before the fireplace, disregarded and unheeded, watched him furtively.

He had come of late, old Peter Hemming, eldest survivor of a long line of honorable but parsimonious Connecticut landowners to ignore his imbecile brother in many matters. For Henry's mental weakness had developed within recent years into a derangement, and his always meager understanding had grown seriously warped. Peter saw no reason, therefore, why this evening's transfer of jeweled family heirlooms, precious plate and hoarded currency, from the ancient brass-bound, padlocked chest to the new repository of combination-guarded steel, should hold for that clouded, twisted mind the smallest measure of interest.

Much more likely, indeed, to arouse those dull wits from their lethargic contemplation of the dimly glowing coals, before which it was Henry's habit to sit hour after hour, were the tidings Peter now conveyed, as, coming forward, he paused at his brother's side.

"It's snowing—snowing hard. I say it's snowing—snowing hard."

The head of the seated old man, bald of crown and parchment-yellow like his vacant, wrinkled face, swayed slowly back and forth in signal that he understood the iterated sentences. "And the moon's at the full," he croaked in return, iterating too. "The moon's at the full."

In the earlier stages of his dementia Henry Hemming had been inclined to craft at these seasons. There was more than one ugly waif word afloat among the neighbors which had to do with his acts of cunning at such times. But in recent years the moons had waxed and waned without exerting any perceptible ill influence upon the crippled intellect. Yet he never failed to note the passing of this lunar phase.

"It's a March blizzard," Peter told him. "It's been raging since three o'clock, and the drifts are already high. If it keeps on, the roads will be impassable before morning."

He repeated each sentence, and his brother's old head swayed again, understandingly. "The moon's at the full," he said, once more. This time he added: "And it's cold; dead cold."

Peter agreed with him. His own fingers were numb. The room was very chill. He pulled an old-fashioned bell-cord, and presently, just as he had seated himself in the leathern chair opposite his brother's, turned up the lamp, adjusted his spectacles and spread out the newspaper that had come in the evening mail—just, too, as the antique hall clock in the passage, in solemn tone, tolled the hour of nine, a hunchbacked servitor, old like his masters, appeared in the doorway.

"The house is a tomb, Abijah," said Peter, a little querulously. "Put more coal in the furnace, and open the drafts. The night is bitter."

Then, for a half-hour and more, the long, somber room was silent, save for the ceaseless whirl of the snow against the window-panes, the intermittent protest of the wind-lashed sashes, and the occasional rustle of the newspaper as Peter Hemming turned its pages. Henry, meanwhile, his faded eyes dim as the dying coals on which they rested, sat crouching, dumb and motionless, like a carven gnome.

It was the habit of the brothers to rise as the clock struck ten, and mount the winding, low-treaded colonial stairway to their second-floor bedchambers. Night after night the practise was invariable. Until the signal was given, Peter read his paper without comment, and Henry never moved, never spoke. But to-night, to the astonishment of the elder of the two men, the crouching figure across the hearth stirred before the clock-stroke; stirred, indeed, fully twenty minutes in advance of the accustomed hour for stirring; and stirred in a quite unusual and alarming manner.

It was the sharpness of the sound made by his withered hands dropping with sudden clutch upon his chair-arms that drew Peter's eyes from the printed column he had been engrossed in and caused him, precipitately, to drop his paper into his lap. Henry was sitting up, very straight; straighter of back, indeed, than Peter remembered ever to have seen him; yet with his naked, yellowish head perkingly slanted and listeningly alert. His eyes, wontedly expressionless, seemed, strangely enough, to have taken on an undreamed-of luster; and as the startled brother stared, the cup of his amazement was brimmed to overflowing by a sharply penetrating, hissing sort of whisper.

"*Listen!*"

"It's the wind," said Peter soothingly, though his heart fluttered, "it's the wind." He had heard nothing else.

But Henry irritably shook his head.

"*Listen!*" he hissed again. And Peter, holding his breath, strained his ears. To him the stillness now seemed abysmal; the wind had passed; the snow no longer smote the panes.

"They're at the door!" Henry cried, suddenly springing from his chair. "Keep 'em out! Keep 'em out!" And he shuffled into the shadows of the room's end.

To Peter it was but another distressing, racking and unlooked for turn of the life-old infirmity. The moon, as he had been reminded, was at the full. He rose, sadly, and started to follow. It must be his mission now to pacify. All his years, it seemed to him, had been given up to ministering to this feeble-minded one.

He moved totteringly, nervously unbraced, only to stumble the next instant to a halt; checked by the sudden clangor of the door-bell, echoing brazenly through the silent house. In panic he laid a shaking hand on the back of Henry's vacated chair, and paused there, white and apprehensive, while Abijah's old feet scraped across the hall—while the chain-bolt rattled and the great lock clicked to the turning key.

The invading rush of icy air seemed to freeze his thin blood. A shiver ran through him, as vainly he strove to gather the sense of the ensuing dialogue which penetrated to him in a vague jumble.

At length, still disturbed, still perplexed, he heard the door slammed against the blast; and then—approaching footsteps. Instinctively he peered once more with apprehension into the gloom of the room's end. Henry, dumbly cowering there beside the safe, was half lost amid the shadows; and Peter, tense though he was with questioning suspense, sighed his scant measure of relief.

At the same instant, Abijah, with some apology of manner, reluctantly admitted two fur-wrapped, snow-encrusted figures—a man and a woman who clung dependently to his arm. The man had removed his cap, revealing sandy hair and a florid, tempest-whipped face. The woman was thickly veiled, and to the veil there still clung splotches of snow or the frost of her frozen breath.

Peter, recovering his self-command with the revelation of their presence, took a step forward, his attitude courtly, yet reserved, inquisitorial.

"I hope you won't think this an imposition." It was the woman who spoke first. Her voice was low, and there was an elusive suggestion of the foreigner in her accent. "But I must have shelter. I am ill, and——" She paused, as if for breath, and the man took up the appeal.

"The motor's stalled, sir." He was evidently her chauffeur. "We've been limping through drifts the past two hours, and——"

"I'm quite willing to pay you anything," the woman broke in. "Your servant seemed disinclined——"

The interruption came, this time, from the old gentleman.

"I do not keep a public house," he said, a little proudly. "I do not entertain strangers. My servant understands that."

"But in all humanity, sir," was her plea, her hand busy now in an effort to raise her veil, "I am an ill woman."

"Humanity," repeated Peter Hemming, in tone less austere, "is another matter. You spoke of payment." He turned to the man. "And you?" he asked.

"I can go on," was the reply. "There's nothing the matter with me; but you see Mrs.—the lady's all in, sir. I'll come back and fetch her in the morning, when the roads is broken. The snow's about stopped already."

"Very well, then." It was at once a signal of consent and of dismissal. He was in haste to conclude the interview, nervous as he had been all the while, lest that cowering imbecile in the corner should humiliate him by sudden word or action.

To Abijah, who had stood waiting, he made a gesture, and the old servitor, understanding, plucked at the sleeve of the chauffeur's fur coat. For the woman, Peter pushed forward a chair.

"Be seated, madam," he said.

But before obeying she turned to her companion.

"My satchel, Frederick," she reminded him.

While Abijah and the chauffeur were out of the room on her errand, and just as, having loosened her veil and turned it partially back over her motoring hood, she exposed a somewhat sallow, but nevertheless strikingly handsome face of the brunette type, there occurred an incident which set poor Peter Hemming's old heart to rapid, uneven, nervous pumping.

For turning uneasily to enquire again as to Henry's whereabouts and conduct, he was startled to discover that he had crept stealthily forward and was standing just behind him. Standing there, a dwarfish, horrid little figure, his wizened face evilly distorted, his eyes still abnormally bright, he was peering with sinister intentness upon the strange visitor.

It was evident, however, that, still busy with her veil, she had not yet observed him, and Peter, in desperate hope of distracting him, ventured upon a shrilly whispered command to return to his chair. But the whisper not only failed of effect on Henry, who still stared, immovable, but served to attract the attention of the woman. Her gaze lifted and met that of her observer; and for just a moment Peter indulged a compensating hope that, alarmed by the spectacle, she might even yet decline the hospitality she had so craved and which he had so grudgingly granted.

To his surprise, however, she evinced no sign of uneasiness. She seemed, indeed, scarcely interested, and the old gentleman, with some reluctance, accorded her a meed of admiration for what seemed to him a superb exhibition of self-control.

He thought of this afterward when Abijah had shown her to the seldom occupied ground-floor guest-chamber across the hall, when the lights were out for the night, and the house quiet, and Henry, having at length been calmed, was snug in bed in the room adjoining his own. He thought of it as he lay wakeful in his great four-poster and reviewed the evening's episode. It came to him as an odd sequel to Henry's singular prescience and subsequent agitation.

He wondered who the woman was, remembering now that she had given no name. Indeed she had volunteered no information whatever, save that she was ill and required shelter. Whence she came or whither she was going had not been so much as hinted. And he had not even thought of inquiring.

The experience distressed and disquieted him. His old brain teemed with a score of conjectures which contended with sleep. Once he fancied that he heard Henry moving in the next room. Later an echo seemed to reach him from the floor below. Finally, in dread, he rose, lighted a candle and went into his brother's chamber. But Henry was sleeping soundly.

II

THE four men were grouped before the guest-chamber door in the dim gray of the lower hall, Peter and Henry Hemming, Abijah and the chauffeur. The night's snow-storm had been succeeded by a steady, pelting rainfall. The morning was chill and dismal. Through the panes of the hall transom a pale, murky half-light filtered.

"Suppose you knock again," Peter suggested; and the chauffeur with some impatience rapped hard and resoundingly, a fusillade of blows.

There was no response.

"That's the fifth or sixth time," the young man declared. "She can't be there."

"No," Peter agreed. "She can't be there. And yet she would scarcely attempt, I suppose, to face this storm afoot; especially since she was expecting you."

Abijah was silent. He seemed only half awake. The truth was he had been aroused from profound slumber by the chauffeur's noisy ringing of the door-bell. Henry, standing a little back, wagged his parchment-like poll and grinned vacantly.

"Suppose you try the door," Peter ventured.

The chauffeur promptly seized the knob and turned it, but the door held.

"It's locked," he said, but even as he said it he turned sharply with an expression that seemed half alarm, half anger, and added: "And locked on the outside! The key's here in the lock!"

Old Peter Hemming caught his breath. He felt his heart falter and then sink. What was that sound he had heard down here, in the night? Why had he thought he heard Henry moving about his room just a little while before?

"Then unlock it!" he ordered, boldly enough; and felt his brother's leering eyes upon his back.

The door swung inward and Peter, forgetful of his customary reserve and dignity, bent eagerly forward for searching sweep of the revealed interior. The bed, tossed and in disarray, was empty. The room was as tenantless as the bed.

"You see!" cried the chauffeur, turning about, a demand in his tone. "You see!" It was as though he said: "Where is she?"

"It is very odd," Peter returned; and Abijah, looking too and seeing, though he said nothing, appeared immeasurably perplexed. Henry did not look. Indeed he retreated a step and leaned against the newel-post at the stair-foot, chuckling low, but malignly.

"She couldn't have left the house," the chauffeur pursued. "She wouldn't in this storm. I know she wouldn't. Why should she?"

He stood with his cap on, his hands plunged deeply in the pockets of his fur coat. His manner had lost its last vestige of deference; his attitude was dictatorial.

Perturbed, tremulous with apprehension though he was, old Peter Hemming resented the fellow's demeanor; and all at once his wrinkled lips hardened to a line over his set teeth, and his old eyes kindled.

"Why should she, indeed?" he snapped. "Why should she without so much as a word of thanks for the shelter my house afforded her? That is the question I myself want answered."

His miser thought had turned suddenly to his possessions. He was recalling how he had admitted a total stranger under his roof. Presumably the stranger was a woman. Certainly all the indications had pointed to this presumption. And yet, had they all so pointed? Most women—indeed who not but the most exceptionally strong-nerved? —would have quailed before that hideously satanic stare of Henry's. But this woman had seen it, unmoved. Might it not have been, therefore, that this fur-wrapped, hooded, veiled creature was, after all, a man —a man of lawless vocation, a thief, a safe-breaker?

At the moment the one convincing argument against such a theory—the fact that her chauffeur had returned and was even now demanding information concerning his mistress's whereabouts—was submerged in Peter's panic of mistrust concerning his hoarded treasures.

"Come!" he demanded, clutching the fellow's fur sleeve. "Come with me! And perhaps we shall see why she, or he, or whatever it was you brought here, sneaked away before the house was astir!"

The young man made no demur. He allowed himself to be led across the hall and into the long darksome sitting-room with its heavy ancient furniture, its thick, faded hangings. The coal fire had long ago died out. The grate held only gray clinkers and white ashes.

Henry followed, more slowly, at a distance; but Abijah, with the instinct of the worker, went into the guest-chamber. Later, after he had prepared the old men's breakfast, he would have to put this room to rights.

In the middle of the sitting-room floor old Peter Hemming's hold on the chauffeur's sleeve suddenly relaxed. His eager stride ceased. Gasping, he stood still, his lips and hollow cheeks white as his snowy hair.

The door of the new fireproof safe was wide open, the polished steel of its lining reflecting the pale light which fell upon it from the near window. The floor about it was strewn with tarnished silver forks and spoons and other pieces of plate; and amid this litter were scattered leather, silk-lined jewel-cases, open for the most part, and empty.

"You see! You see!" he cried, at length, tremulously, his poise but half recovered. "It is as I feared. The person you brought here was a thief!" And he laid agitated hands on the young man beside him.

But the young man shook him off with scarcely an effort.

"Let go of me!" he commanded, smiling cynically. "You're crazy! That's what you are. Why, she'd no more think of doing that sort of thing than the Pope himself would! She's got more money and jewels than she knows what to do with. You've been robbed, my friend, but Mrs.—that's to say, the lady I fetched here, didn't do it. Your house has been broken into. Burglars! That's it. They frightened her, and she's still hiding somewhere. In the garret, maybe, or in the cellar."

Peter listened, dazed, confused. Out of the welter of his thoughts at length emerged a question that spurred him to instant action: Had the thief found the secret drawer—the drawer containing the hoarded currency, the thousand-dollar treasury notes, forty-three of them?

Another moment and he was on his knees before the open safe, his nervous forefinger pressing a spring. At the pressure a steel slide receded and an oblong steel panel came into view. In its center was a countersunk steel ring. Palpitantly, every nerve tense, he slipped his finger within it—drew out the drawer. The bills were there.

As he deftly restored the aperture to its original masquerade he breathed quickly. The jewels could probably be recovered. Little, if any, of the silver, so far as he could see, had been taken. He wondered why. And wondering, he rose.

The chauffeur was still standing in the room's center, his head bent thoughtfully forward, and behind him, creeping stealthily upon him, his face hideous with murderous craft, in his upraised hand an iron grate-bar, was Henry!

Peter Hemming, weighted by three score and ten years and further hampered by a whirling succession of emotions to which he was unaccustomed, found now in his emergency that he was utterly voiceless; found, too, that he had lost the last ounce of power from his flaccid muscles, and so stood gazing, in a torturing agony of waiting, unable to warn, unable to move.

In the eternity of the ensuing second he could only pray with all the fervor of his spirit that to the man in danger might come even yet a saving impulse. And even as the madman was upon him this prayer was answered.

The chauffeur discovering a gold trinket on the floor almost at his feet, all at once stooped down to recover it, and the blow, aimed with crushing intent at his head, fell with deflected and diminished force on his bent back.

In the struggle which ensued, Henry Hemming, although evincing a strength and agility quite marvelous considering his years, was easily overpowered, his adversary throwing him, finally, unarmed, weak and panting, into the depths of his own worn leather chair before the hearth.

There Peter, now restored, distressed lest his brother should have been harmed, came to him and bending solicitously over him murmured soothingly, as might a mother to a hurt child.

"Poor boy! Poor boy!" he crooned comfortingly. "You are not hurt, lad, are you? Tell me! Do you hear? You are not hurt? Tell me you are not hurt!"

He took one of the imbecile's thin, knob-knuckled hands in his own and began to stroke it, while the chauffeur smiled sneeringly and muttered, as he balanced the heavy grate-bar of which he had disarmed him.

"Why—why," exclaimed the ministering brother in pained surprise, "what's this? He *is* hurt. His hand is hurt, here, on the inside. There's blood on it! Poor boy!"

But at that moment there was an almost simultaneous discovery on the part of the chauffeur, whose eyes were bent scrutinizingly on the grate-bar that he held.

"Good God!" he cried. "What's this? There's blood here—clotted blood; and there's hair, too!"

The tall old man rose in dumb alarm. And then there entered, trembling, from the hall, the hunchbacked Abijah. His mouth was open; he was staring with wide, frightened eyes and holding in his arms, as he might have held a baby, a white-cased pillow.

Peter saw him first, but the younger man, quick now to suspect the slightest sound, turned, too, almost instantly.

"Mr. Peter! Mr. Peter!" the old servitor was stammering. "Look at this, Mr. Peter!"

On the pillow case was a great uneven dark red stain.

"*Murdered!*" The voice of the chauffeur echoed through the great room. "Murdered! And by that fiend!" With shaking hand he pointed to the demented Henry, crouching silent, unheeding in the chair by the hearth. "It's her bood on the pillow! It's her blood and her hair on this!"

Old Peter Hemming swayed backward, caught himself, and stumbled gropingly for his chair, opposite Henry's, into which he relaxed with a wailing cry. He covered his wrinkled face with his wrinkled hands and broke into violent sobbing, his tears trickling between his long, bony fingers.

In his struggle with the lunatic the chauffeur's cap had been dislodged, and his dark sandy hair, set awry now by his own excitedly tormenting hands, stood bristling.

"I'll show you!" he raged. "I'll show the lot of you! Don't you think I can't see that pretended safe-robbery was a blind! You had it all fixed. That's why I was brought in here. I was to be interested, so that crazy man could come upon me from behind and brain me. But I was too smart for him." His hand went to the pocket of his great fur coat. "And here's something else! A locket I found on the floor—her locket. Some one of you dropped it, here, in this room. Murdered and robbed! I know. I know what a fortune in jewels she had on her when she came here. Where are they? This was the least valuable of the lot."

He looked about for his cap, and found it. When he had put it on, he turned to Abijah, who was still standing where he had stopped, the pillow dropped to the floor beside him.

"I'm not sure about you," he said sternly. "I don't believe, though, that you are in it. If you were, you wouldn't have brought in that evidence," and with a motion of his foot he indicated the pillow. "I'm going to trust you, anyhow. I'm going to leave these two women-killers in your charge. And if you want things to go well with you, just be sure not to let 'em get away! I'm off to Stamford now for the police! Maybe you can find out while I'm gone where they've hidden my employer's body."

Noisily he stamped towards the door. But at the threshold the voice of old Peter Hemming, who all the while, up until now, had not stirred, arrested him.

"Stop!" he cried, as hastily he rose from his chair. "Stop! I must speak with you!" The old gentleman's eyes were red from weeping, and his voice shook with the stress of his emotion.

The sturdy figure of the excited chauffeur halted and turned quickly.

"Well!" he demanded. "What have you to say now?"

"Nothing, here," Peter answered. His tone was abject. "I wish to speak to you alone. I want you to come into the dining-room for a moment."

Sullenly the young man gestured a reluctant consent.

"Maybe it's a trap," he muttered, "but I'm not scared of fossils. I'll risk it."

In the scantily-furnished wainscoted room to which Peter led him he took a place with his back to the wall, declining a proffered chair. The master of the house stood, too, one hand resting on the oak table, black with age.

"Before you go," Peter began, after nervously clearing his throat, "I have one request to make of you; and after that, perhaps, one plea. I can not but admit that appearances—the circumstances, indeed—are terribly in favor of your contention. But you must concede that until the body is found, or some more conclusive evidence of this woman's death is adduced, we should still have the benefit of the doubt. My request is, therefore, that you accompany me, now, in a thorough search of the house."

Again the chauffeur sullenly acquiesced.

"I meant to have a look in that room she slept in, anyhow," he said.

But when they came to inspect that, they found little to aid in a determination. The blood-stained pillow seemed to have been the only damning exhibit. Her clothes were gone; every scintilla of her belongings was gone, from the traveling-bag she was so particular to have had fetched, even to her hairpins. And her chauffeur seemed disappointed.

"That foxy servant of yours has done this," he growled. "He's cleaned out the place."

His guide made no denial. He led him to a store-room, or large closet, which adjoined. But the inspection here was no more fruitful. The kitchen, likewise, produced, at first, no clew—not, indeed, until the young man, on his own initiative, approached the cellar door with the intention of descending. Then, chancing to look down, he made a discovery. On the bare boards was a sanguinary splotch as large as a quarter of a dollar.

"See!" he cried, with all the feverish turbulence of a hound that has found a scent. "See! It is down here she was carried!" And impetuously he rushed down the cellar stairs.

When Peter, following, perforce more slowly, reached the stair-foot, conviction was there to meet him. The chauffeur was holding a lighted match over a long, fresh-turned pile of earth in one of the stone-arched alcoves. Besides it, earth-stained, lay the coal-shovel as added testimony to the recentness of the work.

Just what quickly followed in the way of added evidence—how from one corner and another this brawny, red-haired Nemesis brought forth damning, irrefutable, dumb testimony, old Peter Hemming never specifically remembered. But from a horrid complexity of impressions a blackened bone dragged from amid the cinders of the stone-cold furnace, and a strand of hair, gore-matted, plucked from an ash-bin, loomed grimly foremost in his brief after-memory.

During the unspeakable moments of this condemnatory unfolding, while staring in dazed horror, his wits had yet been busily conjuring means to save the poor demented perpetrator whom he loved and for whose fate he trembled. For his brother's life, of course, he had no fear. His insanity would protect that. But he dreaded for him that incarceration, worse even, it seemed to him, than death, which exposure of the crime would unquestionably involve. And he dreaded, too, though in secondary place, the smirch on the family name.

Yet how were these consequences to be evaded? Two courses alone presented themselves. And one seemed as difficult of accomplishment as the other. This solitary witness must be quieted, either by bribery or by death. As for Abijah, he felt no concern. In his keeping, any secret of the Hemmings was inviolate.

By the time the chauffeur had exhausted his production of evidence Peter had made up his mind. He would offer to buy the fellow's silence. If he failed in this, then with the dread alternative he must succeed.

When they reascended the stairs Abijah was in the kitchen, perfunctorily preparing breakfast. The tragedy had scarcely scratched the surface of his aged stolidity. And in the sitting-room to which Peter, haggard, wan, pallid as a cadaver, now led the way with dragging steps, Henry, monster in miniature, slept crumpled in his chair. The elder brother, in passing, bent his eyes upon him for a full second, not in horror nor repulsion, not even in reprobation, but with an expression of all-excusing, all-forgiving love and ineffable pity.

In the far corner, opposite the depleted fireproof safe, was an antique mahogany secretary, and on the straight-backed chair before it Peter sank as one wofully weary. And as the chauffeur, now rid of his heavy fur coat, which he had removed the better to prosecute his work in the cellar, took the seat he indicated opposite him, the old gentleman listlessly, as if from sheer nervousness, drew partially open a drawer at his right hand.

At the same moment his eyes roved to the open safe and, catching sight for the first time of the bolts protruding from the edge of the heavy steel door, he realized that last night in the dusk he could not have fully closed it before throwing off the combination. And then there came to him a mental picture of his mad brother, his brain iniquitously distorted by that strange influence of the moon at its noon, prowling here in the night betwixt theft and murder, murder and theft. He even wondered, in that second, where Henry could have hidden the jewels; wondered if he could have buried them with parts of the woman's corpse, and decided that in such an event, since nothing in the world would ever induce him to disturb that mound in the alcove, that they were gone beyond recovery.

The moment of silence between the two seated men was as though Peter, who had craved the interview, had either not quite gathered what he wished to say or was at a loss for breath with which to say it. When, however, eventually he spoke, it was without preliminaries. Headlong he plunged into his proposal.

"I must buy you off," he said bluntly. "The authorities must not be informed. You are not a rich man. I will make you rich; and I will trust you."

The fellow's face, as red now, almost, from excitement as it had been the night before from cold, took on a cynical smile.

"Don't you wish you could?" he sneered.

"I can and I will," the old gentleman persisted. "I'll give you anything in reason to save my poor brother from the madhouse."

"And yourself from the chair," the other added with the same smile.

"I have no fear for myself."

"Well, I've a lot of fear for *my*self," said the chauffeur frankly enough. "I'm responsible for that lady your brother put an end to. How far do you suppose I'd get before they'd be after me to explain what became of her?"

"You can—you must, get away," Peter Hemming urged vehemently. "It's worth it, man. It means a fortune for you. A life without any more work. Think of that!"

"Oh, I'm thinking all right," was the response, "but I don't see it. I'm not taking any chances for a few measly thousand dollars. Besides, what's the use? She and I'd be traced here, and——"

"My denial that you were ever in the house would be enough. My denial that you ever asked shelter here—that we ever heard of your mistress or you. I am honored and respected in this State. No one would doubt my word."

The chauffeur silently shook his head in dissent.

"Come!" pleaded Peter, "let me give you——" and as his hand went tremblingly into the open drawer of the secretary he watched with tense scrutiny the other man's florid face; watched with a prayer that he might, after all yield; with a dread lest he should voice a final refusal.

It was a long, an interminable moment. Then, from the chauffeur came the question: "What do you call a fortune?" And Peter Hemming's sigh was audible. His hand came from the drawer empty.

"Twenty thousand dollars," he said, quickly.

Again the red head turned from side to side.

"Twenty-five thousand."

"Too little." But the refusal lacked emphasis.

"Thirty thousand."

In the chauffeur's eyes the light of cupidity began to burn.

"Thirty thousand. *In cash!*" the old gentleman emphasized. He was straining forward. His breath was coming quick.

"Make it forty; and——"

"You'll say yes?" He gasped it. It was a tense whisper, scarcely audible.

"I'll say yes."

"Forty thousand."

The drawer of the secretary closed with a snap. Of the loaded revolver it contained Peter Hemming now had no need.

III

A BRIEF pause ensued of eminent relief for both. Then the old man, rising, turned totteringly toward the safe. But before he reached it, the sharp jingle of approaching sleigh-bells checked him in apprehension, and he stood alertly listening, with lips parted. The younger man, hearing the sound, rose too; and when, after having waxed louder, it suddenly ceased and was succeeded by the doorbell's echoing clangor, he reached impulsively for his coat and his face went a shade less florid.

"Come now," he urged hoarsely. "I can't wait all day. It won't do for me to be seen here, you know."

"It's probably only a tradesman," said Peter reassuringly. "I suppose the back door is closed by the snow-drifts."

As he stooped to the safe he heard Abijah shuffling through the uncarpeted hall. His finger was on the secret spring when the creak of the opening house door held him for another second inert; held him, indeed, until loud and insistent voices reaching his ears startled him upright again in swift alarm.

Briskly, with short hurrying steps he traversed the room, to meet insolent invasion on the threshold. For the two burly intruders in rain-soaked garments, ignoring his questioning presence, bent their searching gaze over his shoulders to where poor Henry slumbered in his chair; to where, with back turned, the chauffeur crouched in the shadow of the ancient mahogany secretary.

Having recognized in one of the two the town constable, seamed of visage and tawny mustached, Peter was swept by an unreasoning accession of fear. That in some way which he did not stop to question tidings of his brother's crime had got abroad, he could now entertain no doubt. His effort to save him by financial sacrifice had proved futile at the very moment of fancied success. But there was still an alternative. Henry must be spared at all hazards.

"Gentlemen!" he cried, in desperation, "gentlemen! I am at your service. I confess, fully and freely. I—I alone—am responsible!"

The constable turned to him; but the other, taller and less corpulent, paying no heed, strode by him.

"Responsible!" echoed the constable. "Responsible for what, Mr. Hemming?"

A nervous, venerable hand fell agitatedly upon his wet coat-sleeve.

"For the death of the woman," the old voice faltered. "My brother knew nothing of it. I assure you he didn't."

Perplexity and pity were mixed in the officer's expression. He was slow-minded, and he had had a stirring morning.

"Yonder's the fellow, we're——" he began; but the sentence trailed as he sprang forward to the assistance of his partner, who was grappling with the chauffeur for possession of a promptly drawn revolver.

At these odds the scuffle was brief, and Peter, confused and scarcely believing, saw the handcuffs slipped on the fellow's wrists.

"I guess he won't make no more trouble for a while," the constable volunteered as he readjusted his overcoat. "It'll be ten years or more for him and his woman pal."

Peter Hemming shivered. It was evident to him now that the woman's murder was still his secret. The constable had not understood. He wondered why they were arresting the man. He supposed they must both have been fleeing from justice when they were overtaken by the snow-storm.

"We got the jewelry, Mr. Hemming," the constable continued, "and if you'll come up to the court house, any time to-day, we'll——"

The old gentleman stared at him dumbly.

It was the other officer who interrupted.

"We want you to make an affidavit, too," he added. "I suppose it was the old game they worked two years ago in Indiana. And then you can identify the woman, as well."

"The woman!" gasped Peter.

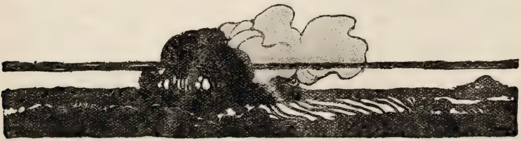
"Sure, the woman," returned the constable. "Come here, and I'll show you something!"

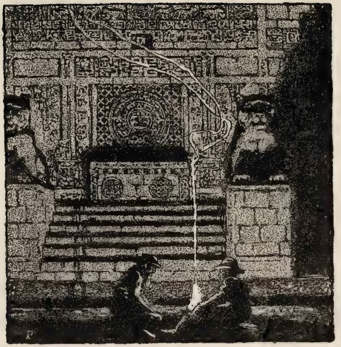
He led him to a front window which overlooked the snow-piled driveway before the house. A two-seated sleigh waited in the rain before the door. On the front seat was the driver, and beside him a female figure wrapped in furs. As Peter gazed the latter turned her head impatiently towards the house, and the old white-haired man cried out in excess of emotion.

"He'll identify her, all right," said the constable to the other, as he supported his shaking charge to a chair. And then, leaning over he explained:

"Clever crooks, these two, Mr. Hemming. The man's one of the smartest safe-crackers in the country, and the woman's a crackerjack on fixin' up a plant. Out in Indiana, they say, she did it with such things as false hair, beef-blood and veal-bones."

Peter's eyes traveled to where his demented brother with chin on chest was still wrapped in peaceful slumber. And as he nodded to the constable in token of understanding, his wrinkled face lighted with a smile of thanksgiving.





The Mahogany Garden

by Frank Stanton Jr.

CHAPTER I

A KNIFE IN THE DARK

HASKELL bent his head not an instant too soon, not a second too late. The steel blade of the henequen sword swept a whistling arc above him and the heavy hooked tip missed his neck an inch—perhaps two inches. His fingers itched to twitch the blue-barreled magazine revolver away from his hip and end this thing. Twice now within ten minutes some one had stooped down from the stone gallery around the patio and tried to snip his head from his shoulders, and though the soft swish of the blade spoke a malice and wickedness that sprang from some most murderous purpose, Haskell had not the remotest conjecture to offer as to why any one should wish to kill him, a stranger, in this strange land.

A month before he had left the mining camps and gone to Denver for his vacation, only to be handed a telegram from the senior member of the great engineering firm with which he had been under contract since he had left Yale, a firm that guided all the mining operations, devised all the irrigation and lumbering systems and surveyed and superintended all the railroad, tramway power-plant, dock and warehouse construction for a powerful Wall Street group with money to invest anywhere in the world that one dollar would make another. The telegram had been brief but specific:

> Robert Haskell,
> Hotel Oxford, Denver, Col.
>
> McIrnery down with typhoid. Go via Mexico City, Vera Cruz, to Progresso, Yucatan, then inland to hacienda of Calderon y Ortegas family beyond Valladolid. Instructions going by Ward Line mail. JOHN R. PETERS.

That was all. That was enough. He had caught the evening train for the land beyond the Rio Grande and, save for the days lost by missing the boat at Vera Cruz, he had traveled with the haste of a king's messenger. That was a standing rule among

"Peters' Men." Up from the coast to Morida and on to Valladolid by train, slow train, the engine of which ate up cords of small wood from piles cut and assembled by Maya peons along the right of way; on from the sun-smitten cluster of stone, stucco and wattle-work houses of Valladolid he had traveled slowly and tediously by platform car.

This meant a little truck about the size of a hand-car, with a canopy over it, drawn by two galloping mules driven by a squat, brawny Maya in cotton shirt and pants, whose stubby, bare great toes turned in; whose skin was the color of an old penny; whose close-cropped wiry hair was crowned with a straw sombrero wound with green and yellow; in whose teeth was clenched a long cruel, plaited whip; at whose side hung one of the long, massive-bladed, bent-tipped henequen knives—a formidable figure who was strangely shy and gentle save to the mules—and for them he found more curses, threats and poetical phrasings of damnation and opprobrium than Haskell had ever heard before.

At the end of the last mile of the narrow rusted tram-rails the ultimate means of travel was mule-back. The last driver of the last tram had hinted that it was wise to travel by day only, but now after nightfall of the second day the white man and his Indian guide had ridden up to the gates of the Calderon y Ortegas hacienda, been admitted by a servant who had vanished without a word, and now Haskell was walking up and down the patio in the moonlight, waiting—waiting to see if some unknown assassin with the henequen knife would get him before the problematic host arrived, or *vice versa*.

He was not greatly alarmed, but it was not a good way to begin on a piece of Peters' work—to allow himself to be killed or wounded or to be compelled to kill in self-defense some one with whom he had no quarrel, so he kept his right hand only *near* the butt of his revolver. There was one advantage he had: though the duel had been going on ten minutes, at least the unknown second principal was not aware that Haskell knew of the danger.

The first thing Haskell had noticed was the fall of a bit of stucco as big as a pea. He had glanced up to the arches of the second-floor gallery in time to see a shadowy figure whisk back out of sight. A moment later, when he had crossed to the other side of the court and was directly under the gallery, he had heard the swiftly indrawn breath of some being above him and, experience having taught him that the drawing of breath precedes the deliberate blow with a knife, he had stooped, pretending to have dropped his gauntlet. Out of the tail of his eye he had seen the downward sweep of the blade. Drawing from his pocket a little round mirror from a transit, he held it in the palm of his left hand in such a way that it could not be seen from above, and though he appeared to be looking down and paying no attention to what went on over his head, he could see well enough to be in no danger so long as the unknown pursued the tactics of creeping around the galleries and striking when the marked man came within reach below.

At the time of the second blow all that Haskell had seen was an arm and head over the parapet and then the sudden swoop and the blow. It had been too quick for him to catch more than a glance in the little mirror, but from that head he had caught the gleam of two eyes that shone like the eyes of a cornered mountain cat.

Now, he walked into the middle of the patio and carefully surveyed the darkened galleries. Not a light was there in all the house. Without, the horses stamped in the dust where the Indian held them; from a distance came the crooning song of the servants in their outlying quarters; a native dog barked inquiringly in the same general direction, and overhead the moon rode the cloudless purple sky verily outpouring a torrent of radiance.

Suddenly he caught a movement in the shadows back under the arches and could scarcely refrain from putting a steel-jacketed bullet into the spot. And then forth into the moonlight there stepped a slender girl!

Haskell's heart beat faster at the sight than it had a few minutes before when he had escaped the first blow, and he dropped his hand hurriedly from the pistol-butt. The thought came—what if he had yielded to impulse and fired at the movement in the shadows?

The girl appeared in the moonlight under the arch at the head of the broad stone stairway leading down into the patio. At the top step she paused and looked down. She was taller and slighter than the sturdy

Maya women Haskell had seen. There was a loose curl in her heavy hair, and from the point where she had it caught up at the crown of her head and fastened it with the familiar thorn and red flower it fell over her shoulders far below her hips. Her neck and shoulders were bare. On her little feet were the soft Maya sandals, and her dress was the simple white native tunic falling in straight Grecian lines from shoulder to ankle and broidered with a deep hem of the brilliantly colored Maya patterns.

When she turned on the stair so that the moonlight fell full on her face Haskell felt a queer little thrill in his throat—it was the type that is the boast of Leon—shadowed, slumbrous, languorous eyes, features of the delicacy of the high-caste Singalese, cream and olive coloring, with a little rich red mouth.

With simple grace she came slowly down the stair, and with his spurs jingling on the red tiling of the court Haskell crossed to meet her. He was absurdly conscious of the layers of dust that lay not only on his clothing but even in the thick yellow brown curls of his head as he swept off his hat and bowed, wondering what language she would use.

"*Buenas tardes, señor*," she said, solving the question by addressing him in a quaint Spanish with a curious little purl in it. Haskell was glad that he was not compelled to use the Maya, which he had begun to acquire from the time he encountered the first Yucateco on the steamer from Vera Cruz. He was sorry to note in her manner, however, not only an absence of the cordiality with which the Spanish-American greets a guest, but a little constraint, a certain chill dignity such as even a chance visiting stranger would not be accorded ordinarily. He returned her salutation:

"Good evening, señorita. I am Mr. Haskell, an engineer sent from the United States to this hacienda, where letters of instruction await me. My preliminary instructions came by telegram; I have no letters, nor do I know for whom to inquire, save some member of the family Calderon y Ortegas."

"I am Ortegas y Escalendon, señor," she said with an added touch of hauteur. Knowing the custom of a husband's following his own name with that of his wife, this told him that she was a niece, on the maternal side, of the family Calderon y Ortegas.

In the recesses of the house somewhere there was a low murmur of hushed voices. The girl saw that Haskell heard them, and a little flush crept into her cheeks while a quick change came over her as she looked at him standing embarrassed and uncertain before her.

"My uncle and his sons are absent from the plantation, señor, but I bid you welcome; pray believe our house is yours."

She accompanied this many-centuries'-old conventional formula with a fleeting smile which seemed to say that though she had been sent to greet him and show him that he was unwelcome she meant to receive him regardless of all considerations. Haskell felt a warm impulse of gratitude toward her, for at the words there was a note of impatience and displeasure in the hushed voices, and then silence.

Twice she clapped her little palms together, and the servant who had admitted him reappeared, took the horses and guide in charge after laying off Haskell's bags, and a sullen old Maya woman, who had been lurking under the arches, led him away to a chamber that opened on the gallery directly at the spot where the unknown knife-wielder must have stood at the time of the delivery of the second blow. Haskell swept the shadowed spots with cautious eyes but, once within the chamber, seeing the spotlessly white pallet, the little gilt shrine, the great earthen bathing-vessel brimming with water, he breathed a sigh of relief, for he was weary from his long journey and here before him were the means to the ends of physical comfort and cleanliness at least. He stepped to the door to close it and place the heavy bar across it when the old servant had backed out. He saw that the girl was still standing on the stair.

"At the señor's pleasure will he attend in the dining-hall?" she said in her low, sweet voice that carried clearly across the broad patio.

On his acknowledgment she turned and walked slowly away toward the gate, where the shadows swallowed her. The grace with which she moved, the exquisite lines of her arms and throat caused Haskell to exclaim to himself, but nevertheless, when he had bathed and replaced his riding-clothes with white military ducks, he drew across his chest the civilian holster designed to carry the heavy pistol under the left arm and examined the weapon carefully before he put it in its resting-place.

There was a knock at the door. Cautiously he opened it, to find a porter with a much-stamped and counter-stamped envelope addressed to him in care of Sr. Don Felipe Ramon Batista Calderon y Ortegas. He ripped it open. The firm's draft for five thousand and his letter of instructions, dictated by Peters himself:

> DEAR HASKELL: You are permanently to supplant McIrnery in this work and are expected to carry it through to success. I am sending my nephew, John Peters, Jr., who has just finished in Berlin, to join you and I expect you to break him in. If he does not show the proper fitness, give me time enough to get another man to you and ship him back without compunction. I am sending him to the hot country to get him out of the way of one of Trainsby's girls as much as anything.
>
> I regret to be unable to inform you in detail of your new work. McIrnery had it in hand direct from the men of the syndicate who investigated it and he is in no condition to transmit his information. However, I trust you to get along without it. Two or three months ago the syndicate acquired from Sr. Don Juan Rafelo Calderon y Ortegas the rights to all the hardwood on lands of the extreme southern part of the family estate on a royalty basis, and you are to estimate the extent of it, select the means of getting it to tide-water, prepare the specifications for the needed plant, order the same through us and install the needed equipment. When it is in operation it will be time to consider placing the work in charge of a superintendent.
>
> Now, my dear Haskell, I have given you no child's task in this mahogany garden, as Embrie calls it, and I have been opposed sufficiently in my selecting so young a man as you, despite the efficiency you displayed in Telluride and the Copper River Valley, to be more than anxious that you should allow nothing to interfere with your making a sweeping success, both for my own sake and vours. Remember that every problem you face is yours, not mine. I wish you unbounded good fortune. Yours cordially,
>
> JOHN J. PETERS.

"And the first dash out of the box some one tries to behead me, and a pretty girl treats me as if the murder would have been justifiable!" said Haskell, puzzling over the strangeness of his reception where nothing that had gone before had conveyed any hint of unpleasantness.

CHAPTER II

DON FELIPE RETURNS

WHEN he stepped forth to the gallery he stopped a moment, scrutinized every shadow, listened for every sound and then strode along toward the stair, keeping well away from the doorways that opened on the arched passageway. The sight of a servant bearing a covered dish into a lighted doorway guided him and he followed into a spacious chamber to the right of the head of the stair.

In the center stood a great table of dark wood roughly polished and evidently hacienda made. Around it were many chairs, also of hand workmanship. The walls were bare, and on the tiled floor were some simple bright-colored mats. In heavy silver candelabra burned a number of candles, lighting the table and the earthen bowls of fruit, fresh cheese and cold fowl grouped about one end, with some bottles of liquors and an *olla*, on the porous sides of which showed the exuding water, the evaporation of which rendered cold the water within. The servant stood aside, steeped in the awkwardness of unaccustomed service, and the door at the farther end of the apartment opened and four women entered, one a massive woman of fifty in an unstayed black silk gown, heavy old gold bracelets and chain, and with bare feet and broad sandals; two younger women, unmistakably her daughters though of a distinctly *mestizo* or part Indian type, clad in the simple Maya tunics with a ribbon or bit of jewelry to give a touch of finery; and lastly the girl who had received him.

With concealed interest and amusement Haskell noted that in greeting him the mother executed something resembling the courtesy of the Empire, the first daughter used the Maya straight-backed, cross-legged bow and the other faltered between the two. Plainly he read the story of the situation in its minor points. Knowing the habitual seclusion of their women by the rural gentlemen of Spanish-American lands, he saw that this appearance was prompted largely by curiosity which could be indulged in the absence of the lords and masters of the *casa*. He had no doubt that before him stood Señora Calderon y Ortegas and her two daughters, and he marveled at the difference between them and the niece. By reason of the hour he felt sure they had eaten the last meal of the day and appeared again to see what he was like under pretense of keeping him company at his meal.

Haskell noted that the niece did not raise her eyes, though her cheeks were flushed as if with anger and she took her place at the table as if in sufferance only. This nettled him and relieved his own embarrassment. With what *savoir faire* his age, experience and understanding of Latin peoples permitted he took the situation in hand and led the talk to matters of the outside world, the things of which secluded women dream hungry dreams. His reward was speedy, and the stages of the change that came over them were interesting to watch. From a stiff dignity that had a strong undercurrent of dislike and enmity, they passed to a slight interest, then a frank curiosity, then questions and naïve comment ending in open good-humor.

Through it all the niece sat silent and for the most part with averted eyes. Plainly she had been rebuked for her welcome to Haskell and was very resentful. Physically fortified by his excellent meal and a glass of satisfactory claret, Haskell talked on until he made the fatal mistake of a reference to his mission. A swift cloud crossed the elder woman's dark brow, the girls dropped their eyes and fell silent, and there was a little impatient movement on the part of the niece that told him he had blundered. In a moment, they rose and, bidding him an almost curt goodnight, left the room.

* * *

TAKING one of the candles, the servant lighted Haskell to his door and was backing out with his "*Buenas noches, buenas noches, señor*," when Haskell called him back.

"See here, *muchacho*, do you know what this is?"

"Twenty pesetas, señor," answered the man, looking at the coins.

"Well, I want you to take this and to understand that there is plenty more for you if you will work for it. I come to this house as a stranger, but I am an honest man and I come on honest business, with no intentions of harming any one or doing any wrong. You know, and I know, that I am looked on as an intruder, as an enemy. I do not know why. Will you tell me why?"

"Señor is a friend and guest in the *casa;* no harm can come to him," answered the Maya, shuffling his feet and looking anywhere but into Haskell's eyes. The engineer laid a gold piece of the largest denomition on the coins and pushed them toward the man with the tips of his fingers. The Indian shot him one furtive glance.

"You know that is not true, 'Nacion. I am not afraid, but I do not want to go on in the dark."

"My father and his father worked on this hacienda, and I shall work here, and, with the sacred mercy, my children shall work here. I can not serve the señor." The man's direct and simple expression of loyalty evoked Haskell's admiration. He slowly pocketed the money. He had heard that the Mayas, though a terrible people when roused, were brave, patient and steadfast.

"You are an honest man, 'Nacion. Good-night."

The Indian turned to go, but at the door he hesitated, fumbled at the tawdry sacred medallion at his throat, and said in a lowered tone.

"The señor should be very careful and go soon, or it may be the same things will come to him as to the other *caballero*."

"What other *caballero?* What do you mean?"

Encarnacion stepped quickly to the pallet and drew from its place of concealment a little red morocco photograph-case and gave it to Haskell. Within was the small picture of a very beautiful girl across one corner of which was written, "Semper fidelis, Gertrude Trainsby." It had come from young Peters' personal belongings! The lad was here in advance of him, thanks to the lost days at Vera Cruz! Apparently he had occupied this very room. Where was he now? What had befallen him? What did the Maya mean by "the same things" which had befallen the youngster? As these questions flashed through his mind, Haskell felt a hot anger rising within him. He whirled on the impassive Maya.

"This belongs to a young man who was to work with me in this country. I command you to tell me where he is!"

"I do not know."

"When was he here?"

"Don Felipe can tell you all—but—señor, *do not wait till he comes back!*"

The man was retreating toward the door as he said this, and with the last word he darted out. Haskell cursed softly under his breath, pocketed the little red case, inspected the room with the candle to be sure that there were no means of entrance save the door and, after barring this, went to bed, the revolver tied to his right wrist by a thong.

Somewhere about dawn there was a clatter of hoofs in the courtyard, and in his subconsciously alert state the noise awoke Haskell. Peering over the transom he could see several horsemen below. Three, in the habiliments of *haciendados*, were ascending the stair, and four others, evidently servants, were leading away the horses and mules. As nearly as he could make out in the dim light the party had been on a hard ride, and before they entered the house the three men thrashed their clothing to get off the dust. One of these was squat, massive and wore a heavy square black beard; the others were younger and slighter men —evidently the master of the house and his sons. Haskell noted that they were well armed, bearing pistols on hip and leaving three carbines leaning against the stone newel at the right of the foot of the stair.

Rapidly he dressed and, when silence had fallen over the place, he stepped from the room and reconnoitered. No one was in sight save the porter squatted by the gate asleep. Acting on impulse the engineer stepped quickly down to the carbines, threw the bolts and drew out the firing-pins; then he returned to his room and waited. Soon the songs of the peons on their way to the henequen fields rose and died away, the household servants began to appear and the two daughters came forth on the gallery from a door on the other side of the court. Next Encarnacion came to his door bringing a bowl of fruit and pieces of bread browned through and through, and a mug of milk and coffee.

"Don Felipe is home, I see," remarked Haskell as he ate.

"*Si, señor,*" was the Indian's sole response, and, try as he would, the engineer could not draw him into conversation.

When the Maya had gone Haskell lighted a cigar and began to ponder his best course in the face of the baffling strangeness of all that had happened. The question was whether to take the bull by the horns at once or to pursue the policy he had begun the night before when he had pretended not to be aware of the knife-blows. He decided to let circumstances guide him and, leaving the middle buttons of his jacket unloosed so that he could draw with proper speed if matters came to a sudden climax, he strolled forth on the gallery.

CHAPTER III

MORE WARNINGS

JUST around the pillars of the corner he beheld a pretty sight. Holding a parrot on one forefinger, Señorita Ortegas y Escalendon stood leaning against the parapet, feeding the creature berries from the other hand. Her hair was bound in heavy braids about her little head, and her simple clinging tunic revealed the exquisite lines of her body sufficiently to complete a pose of the utmost grace. In her creamy cheeks shone a faint color, and her eyes were dancing as she teased the bird.

At the sound of his step she turned, and Haskell meant that she should read the admiration in his eyes. Her lowered lids and heightened color signified that his wish was granted.

"*Buenos dias, señorita,*" he said cheerily.

"Good morning, señor; we hope that you rested well in our house last night."

Haskell said that he had and spoke of the beauty of the morning. Then, with his eyes on her face to catch its most vagrant expression, he asked whether the master of the house was among the men who had arrived at dawn.

Her lower lip quivered a trifle, her eyes grew shadowed and after a quick glance at him she said, as if addressing the bird:

"Don Felipe is now in the house."

"And may I see him soon to take up my business with him?"

She put her hand on his arm with a quick, detaining, protesting gesture, and as quickly withdrew it.

"Oh, señor, you must go away! I am so sorry that you came!"

"Since I have found you here, señorita, I am very, very glad I came," he answered, putting a purposeful earnestness in his tone. "I came here in all innocence and honesty, supposedly at the wish of Don Felipe and all concerned, and I do not see why I should go away until my business is finished. You surprise me by what you say. What do you mean, child?"

She shuddered and turned away without answer.

Within one of the rooms on the family side there was a peremptory hand-clap, a call in a brutal tone for a servant, followed by a savage, ill-natured oath. The girl shrank as from an imaginary blow and half pointed to the door of the room from which the sounds came. Encarnacion appeared on winged feet to answer the summons.

"Is *that* Don Felipe?" asked Haskell in a hardened tone.

"That is the master. I beg you, I implore you to go!" she whispered, trembling and coming close to him, her eyes on the doorway down the gallery. With an assuring, protective instinct he put his arm half about her. The color flamed into her cheeks, she threw back her head and gave him one blazing flash from her eyes as she drew herself erect, but before the look that had come on his face at the touch, the nearness of her, her glance softened, her lower lip trembled like that of a hurt child and she whirled away from him and vanished down the corridor, leaving him strangely stirred with emotions new and strange to him, but not unwelcome.

"Little girl," he said to himself, "if this were hell I would stay!"

Left alone, he leaned against one of the pillars, smoking quietly and listening. In a little while 'Nacion appeared, backing out the door, and in a moment Don Felipe followed. His heavy hair and his thick beard were still damp from his bath, but his cotton clothing was white, fresh and immaculate and there was an air about him that evoked Haskell's admiration.

"*Ah, señor,*" he cried at sight of the American, "*buenos dias, buenos dias!* I regret not having been at home when you came; my house is yours, pray believe me," and he advanced to bow courteously, smiling with his lips but not with his eyes; nor did he offer his hand, for which Haskell thought the better of him.

"Don't speak of it, sir; your family received me most hospitably and if my instructions had been more definite I should have known how and to whom to send notice of my coming."

Haskell, with his right hand never far from the opening in his jacket near the butt of his revolver, watched the other narrowly.

"Did you have a pleasant journey to the peninsula? It is useless to ask farther than that, as we are so primitive here that traveling is hard for men used to the easy ways of civilization, so you must forgive our humble and comfortless methods of living, Señor Haskell."

The engineer could scarce repress a smile as he thought of the intended addition of thirty inches of henequen knife to his comforts the night before, but he said cordially:

"For years I have been living in camps in outlands and I like the life; and, contrary to what you say of your district, I have enjoyed my two days in it very much and am looking forward to a pleasant stay during the period of my work."

"It shall be our gratification to contribute in every way to your pleasure and entertainment!"

Don Felipe had a little light in his eyes as he said this that would have been envied by the devil himself.

"Of course, having lost several days, I am anxious to get on the grounds at once. Now to clear away any misunderstanding, I am here as the agent with full authority of the syndicate which has acquired from Señor Don Juan Rafelo Calderon y Ortegas the rights to cut and export the mahogany and other hard woods from certain lands close to the border of the district, and if my calculations are correct, the nearest part of the tract is not over ten miles to the south. I was ordered by telegraph to come to this hacienda and here I found a letter of instructions. Señor Don Juan Rafelo is your father?"

"My father is dead. This is a brother." There was a hidden significance in his choice of words.

"Is the forest near?"

"Yes; yonder, not a league, begins the great woodland and it extends on hundreds of miles, and there are things hidden away in it which the world never dreams of."

"Yes, I know the Central American forest is comparatively unexplored."

"And though the sun shines fiercely and the rain pours down like a river from the clouds and the trees and vines grow thick, some men may pass through parts of it, but they will come out knowing little. Even the Maya aborigines fear it."

"Well, with your help in securing provisions and a guide, I shall ride to-day to begin taking care of the part of it assigned to me."

"Ah, but not to-day, señor. You have no reason for haste. Is my hospitality falling so short——"

"No, far from it, Don Felipe; but I have lost too much time and I must push on to join young Peters, my assistant." Haskell's eyes dwelt coldly on the other's face.

"Peters? Peters? Your assistant is now in the mahogany garden?"

"He came here before me. Have you not seen him?"

Don Felipe shook his head as if deeply puzzled. "No, Señor Haskell, I have not seen him or heard of him."

Slowly, without taking his eyes from the

Yucateco, Haskell drew out the little red case:

"You surprise me. This is his; I found it last night in the room in which I slept."

Beyond a fierce gleam in his eyes Don Felipe gave no sign of being disconcerted.

"Strange, indeed," he said suavely. "There was a young gentleman who stopped with us one night while I was away and he slept in that room, but I did not learn his name or his business. He rode on before my return and I do not know where he is."

For a moment Haskell was afraid to speak, for his blood was boiling within him, but he realized that, being single-handed against a rich and powerful *haciendado*, with hundreds of peons at his back, and far from communication with the outside world, his only hope of avenging anything that had befallen young Peters, and of saving his own life, was to dissemble till he could secure a position of vantage.

"This is most unfortunate, for I can not waste time in hunting for him and I need his help at once. He is certain to return here to join me, and the best that I can do is to have you send him on to my camp."

"No, señor, you must permit me to send my boys into the forest to look for his party, and you can remain here and give us the pleasure of your society meanwhile."

"Your kindness overwhelms me, but I regret to say that I must ride on to-day. Can it be arranged that I start at once?"

"If the señor will, he will," said Don Felipe with a shrug of his shoulders.

He called to the porter, ordered his own and Haskell's horses and sent an Indian maid scurrying to prepare the required provisions. He disappeared into his room, returning in a little while, booted and spurred, and by the time Haskell had assembled his belongings the horses were waiting. Looking down from the gallery Haskell saw that the party was to be made up of himself, the Indian who had ridden with him to the hacienda, Don Felipe and two burly *mozos* armed with the long henequen knives.

Just then 'Nacion appeared. Haskell saw something flutter from his hand to the tiling and, picking it up, he reentered his room. It was a crumpled green leaf, but inside was a tiny note:

THE SENOR HASKELL:—Do not go. Do not go. I shall never see you again, for you go to die.

EMALIA.

CHAPTER IV

AN ATTACK AND A RESCUE

HASKELL'S heart seemed to expand within him. It mattered to her whether she did see him again! Perhaps she was right, but he felt his chances were better in the open than in the hacienda, so he stood at the head of the stair and bowed low before Señora Calderon y Ortegas as he expressed his gratitude for the pleasure of having been in her house. Then he descended and mounted, keeping a careful eye on Don Felipe.

The latter seemed quite merry and, saying that they might find a spotted cat in the woods, caught up one of the carbines and threw it by the strap across his pommel. For a man accustomed to the handling of firearms, this was a strange thing to do. Any one riding up even with the muzzle was likely to be killed by an accidental discharge, but Haskell, pretending not to see, quietly and unhesitatingly took his place beside the *haciendado*, not a foot from the muzzle of the weapon, and so they rode away.

At the first opportunity, Haskell looked back and was sure that a certain figure he saw darting among the bushes that screened the way from the house to the little houses of the peons was that of little Emalia, and, stealing a glance now and then, in a few minutes he made out the same figure returning, and another, a little man mounted on a pony, riding swiftly off in a direction that paralleled their course, as if he meant to intercept them. If Don Felipe or the *mozos* noted the little rider they gave no sign.

The party was now moving straight south. Far, far distant was an uneven blue line, the higher wooded lands. To the right and left and behind them stretched uncounted miles of scrub thickets with now and then a full-grown tree, the dreary waste broken by the henequen fields, the miles of rows of the golden source of the peninsula's vast wealth.

Haskell had noted that the plants were very much like the century-plant, scores of thick, fleshy leaves averaging a yard in length growing out from one low, thick stem. Through those leaves he knew ran a fiber which, when stripped of the watery pulp, made sisal hemp, from which the world's binder twine for harvesting machines is spun. Grown and shipped to the United States at a cost of two cents a pound, and bringing ten cents a pound after the destruction of the Philippine hemp industry, the Yucatecos—white, *mestizo* and Maya—owning the lands, the only lands in the world on which the plant could be grown, were made millionaires in a few years' time.

Not one-twentieth of the land could be cultivated because of the scarcity of labor, and that kept up the price. After the fifth year a plant would produce for thirty years, and it required little attention, for the soil was so dry and stony that even the weeds were unenthusiastic.

Not that there was not enough rainfall. The trouble was that when the rain fell it went down through the soil at once and collected on the hard-pan floor from ten to a hundred feet below the upper level, where it formed subterranean rills, brooks, swamps and rivers called *cenotes*, a peculiar condition similar to that in certain districts in the Belgian Congo, the American desert and in the Jamaican cockpit country. Here and there, dotted about the level plain of the peninsula, were holes where the earth had fallen in, exposing the underground streams. Sometimes the hole was a few feet deep; sometimes one must descend a fraction of a mile to get water.

The greater part of an hour passed before the party was beyond the bounds of the last henequen field and out of sight of the last group of laboring peons. The trail led straight on into the thicket, and Haskell noted that the number of large trees was increasing, but he dared not take his eyes from matters close at hand. From the tail of his eye he must catch the first suspicious movement of Don Felipe's hands.

Once or twice Don Felipe reined up to scan some tracks in the trail, and, again, he called a halt and commanded silence while he listened as if he heard sounds ahead that alarmed him, but he rode on again until they came to a cluster of rocks. Haskell was forced to ride a little to the front. He heard the click of the bolt of the carbine as Don Felipe threw in a cartridge, and, as he turned, the muzzle was pointed full at his back. Hate and murder shone in the *haciendado's* eyes as he pulled the trigger, but the carbine did not speak. There was only the snap of the trigger.

"You dirty, murderous, cowardly dog!" cried Haskell, throwing the blue nose of his gun level with the Yucateco's eyes.

Charging like a dragoon came the first of the two *mozos*. The other could not get around Haskell's astonished guide, who had reined up squarely across the trail. Seeing the flash of the upraised henequen knife, the American swung the pistol at right angles and let three of the bullets from the magazine pour forth before he took his finger from the trigger. The terrific impact of heavy steel-jacketed missiles seemed to lift the *mozo* out of the saddle, and he pitched sideways among the rocks, while his pony clattered on toward the forest.

But Don Felipe had had time to draw his revolver. A shot splintered Haskell's pommel and burned his thigh. Another whirred under his ear, and then he fired. The glittering pistol whirled into the air, and Don Felipe, cursing bitterly, clapped his left hand to his right forearm, where there was a red welling of blood on the white sleeve. Rearing madly and backing from the flame of the revolver before his eyes, the Yucateco's horse threw himself and rider behind the guide and his mount.

It was a stroke of fortune for the *haciendado*, this confusion between the two Indians and the blocking of Haskell's line of fire. He saw it and, seizing the reins, whirled his horse and sped down the trail. The *mozo* followed suit, and the best that Haskell could do was to send Don Felipe's horse to his knees. The rider was off as the horse fell, up behind the *mozo* and out of sight untouched, though Haskell sent the last of nine shots after them.

Well back on the trail could be heard the drumming of many hoofs and many voices shouting. In advance was a lone rider approaching rapidly. Now he dashed into sight. It was the little man Haskell had seen riding away from the quarters of the peons. He was a cripple with a withered hand and a queer twisted face.

"Señor, don't wait! Come quick, señor! Follow me and ride fast!" he cried, reining up and turning under the very nose of Haskell's horse.

The engineer stooped and caught up the carbine, rode over to Don Felipe's dying horse and lifted the ammunition belts from the saddle; then set out after the newcomer and the guide, already a hundred feet ahead on the trail toward the forest.

In about ten minutes the three came to a little eminence and the cripple drew rein and pointed back. Not more than half a mile behind them was a large party of horsemen. Haskell studied them with his glasses. Don Felipe was leading all the others, his right arm bandaged roughly and bound across his chest, his two sons close behind him and a dozen *mozos* from the hacienda mounted on any sort of animal from an antiquated stallion to a female donkey in foal.

"Let me see if I have forgotten the trick," said Haskell, throwing open the carbine, replacing the firing-pin, throwing the bolt and taking careful aim. With the crack of the gun, the horse of the second son plunged headlong, sending his rider sprawling, and the whole column came to a halt.

"This little thing is a wonder!" said Haskell, gazing at the neglected piece with admiration, as they rode on.

The trees and the undergrowth grew suddenly more dense. They had come to the belt of soil that retained the moisture, and the tropical forest was begun. Save for the stifling closeness of the air it was a relief from the sun to get in under the interlocking arms of the great giants woven together with festoons of creeping plants whose main stems were nearly as large as the trees themselves and whose farthest, newest tendrils would be hundreds of feet from the parent root. It is a popular idea that the tropical forest always teems with animal life. The truth is that there is far less than in the temperate zone, save in rare localities.

The section through which the riders were now passing was silent and deserted, and after half an hour the very sound of the horses' hoofs seemed to become magnified to something enormous and dreadful. The little withered man begun to scan the wayside signs carefully, for the trail was growing fainter, and at a point where it had branched he had taken the faintest of three paths. At last he halted before a veritable wall of creepers and parasitic plants at one side of the trail and, moving a part of the whole aside as a curtain, signed for Haskell to dismount and lead in his horse. To his amazement the engineer found himself in an old machete-trimmed pathway now growing shut once more.

For two hundred feet along this artificial path they made their way and came to a veritable wall of growing tree trunks matted with vines. Something in the set of it suggested to Haskell that it had been purposefully planted, like a hedge, and he said as much to the cripple, who smiled and nodded his head and said cryptically:

"When a man lives in among the trees he must build his walls with them."

Twisting around this trunk, stooping under that one and squeezing between another two, they passed the living barrier and stood in a great circular place grown up with a thicket to the height of a man's head. From the center rose a four-cornered mound at least ninety feet tall, and on the truncated top, embowered in great trees, was a broad stone building, with ruined sides, carved in beautiful, deeply cut designs. All along the face of the wall nearest to him was a row of darker stone on which Haskell made out successive figures of the Central American tiger.

"*El Iglesia del Tigre!*" said the little old cripple, making a curious gesticulation with his withered hand.

Haskell knew he was looking for the first time on one of tens of thousands of ruined buildings which dot the country from the Gulf of Mexico to the lakes of Nicaragua, bespeaking the life and death of a wonderful people, older than the Aztecs, even older than the Toltecs, perhaps even more ancient than the Colhuans, and some say that these stone cities, often miles in extent, were teeming with the life of a highly civilized people long before the days of Babylon or the birth of the first Pharaoh.

CHAPTER V

THE TEMPLE OF THE TIGER

THE engineer stood gazing at the strength and beauty of the architecture of the ruined building. The cripple watched him a moment with pleasure and then said:

"You see but one, and a little one, señor. The white men have found Uxmal, Chichen-Itza, Palenque, Copan and the other great cities, but the others they have not seen. There are those through which the señor must travel half the day to pass, even without looking, ah, for they are far greater. The trees have grown up to hide them since the Great Serpent took our people away, and the señor might travel through a city and be within ten steps of a thousand houses and yet see none of them. I have passed through such, and when a little boy with my father he showed me one of the greatest of all the temples and said that some day he would run away from the hacienda and we would travel to the heart of the forest where there was a city of our people that still lived."

It was the old familiar evasive legend which one hears throughout the length and breadth of the continent; the circumstantial tale that somewhere in the depths of the forest there is a city where some of the ancient race still live cut off from the world by the wilderness.

Suddenly the American realized that the cripple was taking the saddle from his pony, and he cried:

"Here, *mozo*, what are we going to do? This is no place to camp—no water."

"The señor does not know," said the cripple gently. "From a hole in the stone seat of El Tigre Grande runs fine water. Our horses are tired and no one at the hacienda can find the way here but me. Let Don Felipe ride on—let him ride to purgatory—he can not come here!"

Out of the door of the old temple ran a little stream and it cascaded in a deeply worn channel down to the level on which they stood. The freed pony was even now wending his way to the little pool formed at the base of the mound. How, without a hidden pump, could that water be made to flow from that high point? Within miles there was no land that was as high. It could not be a spring.

"All right, my man," said Haskell, yielding. "By the way, what is your name, how did you happen to come to my help and what is the meaning——"

"The señor serves himself best by the single question that calls for the single answer," said the little man with a queer bow. "I am Juan and my father was Pedro Juan and my grandfather was Juan Ramon. We have been of the hacienda since the coming of the true religion and the days of the old wars. But my mother was from the hacienda Ortegas and when their lands were taken away by the Governor my mother bade me see to the mother of the Little One."

"The mother of Señorita Emalia?" inquired Haskell.

"*Si, señor.* Now I lose all things for her."

"How?"

"Your friend comes here to take away from the Mayas their forest, and Don Felipe and his sons ride out with him as they rode out with you."

"Is he dead? Do you know anything, Juan?"

"They rode out; they rode back this morning, and he is dead or they would not have come back. It is as it should be. You should have been killed also."

Haskell looked at him aghast.

"I should be killed! Why?"

"Don Felipe had the papers to say that you would take away our forest."

"No, Juan, not your forest; just some of the trees. And Don Felipe has been paid tens of thousands of pesetas to allow me to do it."

"Then he lied to us!"

It seemed queer to Haskell that Don Felipe, having the absolute power, even to life and death, over the peons of his remote hacienda should have taken the trouble to explain or lie to them; but he put it among the other mysteries of this strange adventure.

"Tell me who tried to kill me from the gallery of the house, Juan."

"Ernesto. You shot him a while ago."

"And why, if you think, or did think, I should be killed, did you ride out to-day and help to save my life?"

"Because the Little One came to me and said the Ortegas needed that I should ride ahead of you, that I should kill Don Felipe if necessary and take you to the runaway Mayas in the forest whence no man ever comes back to the hacienda even though he starves."

"The señorita told you to kill Don Felipe if you had to do so to save me?"

"*Si, señor.*"

"Would you have done it?"

From where he lay on the grass, Juan turned so that he displayed his withered arm, drawn face, misshapen leg.

"When I was in the woods with my father, he had run away with me, but when I and my brothers were starving we went back and Don Felipe's father beat my father to death before all the hacienda. Me they tied up and let little Don Felipe beat me till he was so weary that he wept. Since that day I have been like this."

Haskell could not repress a shudder and he found himself looking forward to the next time Don Felipe Calderon y Ortegas was within whip-range.

"So you are going to take me to the runaways in the woods, eh, Juan? Since I have business to which to attend, suppose I will not go?"

"Then I will bring them and we will take you."

Haskell laughed outright at the cool finality of the assertion.

"All right, Juan, we will wait and see."

Taking his observation instruments from his bags, Haskell parceled them between the three of them and led the way up the steep slope of the mound, saying he wanted to make sure of their exact location. The red men looked on the lensed brass things as the appurtenances of witchery and handled them with fear.

The ruined temple Haskell found to be far less ruined than he had imagined. The walls were of solid masonry about eight feet thick and twenty-five feet high. The space they enclosed was about eighty by one hundred. All around the walls were the niches in which the wooden beams, rotted and gone thousands of years ago, had once reposed when they supported the roof. There were no rooms, but on either side of an altar, on which perched a huge stone tiger, were the remains of foundations that showed there had been wooden structures within the square. From just beneath the tiger ran a two-inch stream of pure cold water—a complete mystery to him, an insoluble problem in hydrostatics.

On both the outer walls and inner panels were inset single stones about a foot square, on the face of each of which was carved a different design of curves and dots, the indecipherable hieroglyphics of the so-called Maya language, the written, stone-treasured narratives of a people which Le Plonjeon says will add ten thousand years to the history of humanity when the man is found who can read them aright.

In the enclosure were a number of large trees, one a gigantic hardwood tree, at least eight or nine hundred years old and reaching up one hundred and fifty feet in the air. Buckling on steel climbers, Haskell spiked his way up the great trunk, clinging to the huge ridges of the bark and, perching in a crotch near the top, looked out over the scene. To the north lay the reaches of the wild scrub thicket, broken by the white cultivated expanse of the hacienda; east, west and south swept the forest.

To the eastward there seemed to be a dip in the horizon. At first he thought it was a low-lying cloud-field there, but, leveling his glasses, he saw that the forest stopped short off—in fact, seemed to have a sort of bay in it, and that at the outer edge of this was the sea.

If it was swamp through which a channel could be forced and logs floated to tidewater, he knew that it meant much to him.

HE WAS about to descend, thinking what a fort the temple would make, when he noticed some moving spots between him and the far hacienda. By careful work he made out that it was Don Felipe's party returning. Not all of them, however. One son and five men had been left behind in the forest. The *haciendado* had left a sort of patrol while he hurried home to have his wound dressed, lay his plans and get reenforcements, not to effect a capture once the fugitives were overtaken, but to locate them.

None of them had seen Juan at the time of the shooting and Haskell realized that the two sons and the other men had ridden after Don Felipe, not when they had discovered Juan's departure, but when they had found the two carbines left behind to be minus their firing-pins. That had told them that Don Felipe was armed with a useless weapon and that Haskell was on his guard. The natural thing had been to set out post-haste. It was a relief to the engineer to think that Emalia's part in the affair was not discovered, to lay her open to abuse, perhaps real danger, at the hands of her brutal uncle.

Juan had built a fire of dry sticks when Haskell descended after making a rough topographical map of the country, and was preparing the evening meal, careful that no smoke should rise from the cooking. The blaze was screened within the temple and they kept it alight till long after dark. The Indian Haskell had brought with him was very silent and apparently dejected all evening, while the American sat by the fire, listening to the tales of the old Mayas which Juan had to tell. But neither of the others thought anything of the lad's behavior, and all three lay down to rest, confident that where no enemy could find his way in daylight none could come by dark.

When Haskell awoke at daybreak the first thing he noticed was that the Indian's place was empty. Calling to Juan, he ran to the door of the temple. The lad was gone and had taken his horse; not only that, but he had taken so much of the food that there was not enough left for more than two meals. It was plain that he had noted carefully the path through the labyrinth of tree-trunks and, filled with fears of the forest, being a plantation-bred Indian pure and simple, he had deserted. If he had left early he might have reached the hacienda by midnight. If so, then Don Felipe and his men might be at the very door of their hiding-place this minute!

Mounting the tree quickly, while Juan prepared breakfast, Haskell surveyed the country. Nowhere was there a sign of the pursuit, but as he studied the trail from the hacienda his heart gave a great leap. In an opening a big white horse showed for a moment; then came a mule bearing a *mozo*. But the rider of the white horse? At the next opening Haskell saw it was Emalia, riding toward the forest in desperate haste.

CHAPTER VI

NUNEZ PAOLA

TAKING a reflector, he tried to throw a ray of the rising sun in her direction as the signal-corps man heliographs. If the rays reached her she did not make them out, for she rode on without heeding. Some of Don Felipe's men descried him, though. A half-spent bullet whined through the air below him and a report among the trees to the west located the marksman. There was another and closer shot from less than two hundred yards beyond the labyrinth and, taking the sheltered side of the tree, Haskell hurried down. Not only was their hiding-place discovered, but they were surrounded!

Juan was painfully indifferent about the matter. "Every man must die some time," said he with a toss of his head, but he agreed with Haskell that they could stand siege so long as the food held out, and that forty men could not take the mound even by assault, save in the hours between sunset and moonrise. The temple had but the one entrance and they need defend that and no more. As for evacuating and taking flight, there was no path except the one by which they had entered and this must be known to the enemy.

With a heavy heart Haskell went about inspecting the outside of the temple from the top of the wall. That Emalia should imperil herself for his sake was the depressing, painful thought, though it brought him a great joy to know that her heart had prompted her to make what was plainly a useless attempt. Having made certain that the temple could be approached only by the front slope of the mound, he descended and helped Juan make a barricade for the entrance. By great effort they got one of the horses half way up the slope, intending to use them for food if need be, when a shot from the forest dropped the animal and a sharp fire that followed compelled them to retreat to the temple walls.

The morning grew on slowly, and at last the sun was at the meridian. All was still and peaceful. A vagrant troop of monkeys passed in the tree-tops at some distance, and during the afternoon they heard now and then the deep, solemn note of a distant bell.

"*El Campanero!*" whispered Juan, crossing himself.

"And what is *El Campanero?*"

"He is a bird of size and his voice is the voice of a bell. When the bell rings by day it is for souls that are to pass!"

Haskell laughed, but a little shiver crept about the back of his neck.

As the evening drew on, there fell a great stillness broken only by a little burst of outcries among some vagrant paroquets in the forest and the dismal sounds of the vultures, descended from their vigilant circling aloft to their night's perch in the vicinity of the bones of the horse and man killed the day before. The sun dropped slowly to the horizon and then, as is the way in those latitudes, seemed to shoot down in haste before the onrushing darkness.

In fifteen minutes it was a transition from broad daylight to velvety black gloom intensified by a miasmatic mist wafted inland from the seaboard. Haskell took a sheltered position behind the barricade. Juan crept down the gully worn by the water from the altar of the tiger, first fastening in his hair two of the big glow-beetles of the region so that Haskell should not mistake him for one of the enemy. The keen eyes of the old Indian were to be counted upon to detect the first signs of attack.

Gradually his eyes, marred by the uses

of civilization, became accustomed to the gloom and Haskell found he could make out the trunks of trees and other objects at the base of the mound. Suddenly there was the scratch of a match in the stillness. A point of flame burst out down the slope. Juan had lighted a clump of dried twigs and was hurrying up the gully. As he darted across the open space before the barricade and climbed the front of it to enter, a dozen points of flame cut the darkness from the edge of the labyrinth.

Don Felipe's men had wasted no time. The attack was on. By the growing light of the fire Haskell made out several darting figures among the trees, and he fired. A howl of pain was the sign of his success. Their bullets had pattered about the front of the temple. Juan had not had a close call even. Again Haskell pulled trigger, and every human form vanished from sight. For a few minutes all was still.

Then came a murmur of voices off to the right, in the direction from which the wind was coming. A light broke out there. They, too, were lighting a fire! Now they kindled a second and a third, and the terrible truth burst upon the two defenders. By firing the dry undergrowth on the windward slope of the mound they meant to shroud the temple in a pillar of fire and either drive out their quarry or cook them alive.

With an oath Haskell ran to the eastern wall and scrambled up the broken stones. Lying flat, he crawled to the edge. Two of Don Felipe's men were just lighting another blaze and, as he fired, they darted for cover, one of them falling, but rising and dragging a wounded leg.

From the avidity of the flames it was plain that in five minutes a wall of fire would be beating against the temple; that the parasitic plants on the stonework would catch and the interior would follow. There was nothing to do but escape down the darkened side. Sliding back, he began to descend, but exposed himself for an instant and a shower of bullets cut the smoky air about him. A blaze shot up from the other side of the mound. They were trapped—completely, fully trapped!

"Señor!"

The voice came from close at hand as he touched the ground. It was not Juan speaking—Juan was kneeling behind the barricade.

"Señor!" said the voice again.

Haskell whirled. It came from the wall within ten feet of him. Slowly one of the big stones there turned as if on a nicely adjusted pivot, and in the narrow opening Haskell beheld the dim figure of a beardless old man of powerful frame.

A shower of sparks and burning fragments fell within the enclosure, lighting up the ancient carved walls and setting fire to the undergrowth in many places.

"Call your *mozo* and come quickly!" said the old man.

Juan had no need to be called. He had seen the seeming apparition and appeared to understand its exact meaning, for he came on a hobbling run, and, as the stranger stepped aside, was the first to dart into the opening in the masonry. Haskell handed the old man his carbine and, darting across the enclosure, caught up his bags and belongings and hurried back. The barricade was now on fire and the heat was so intense that it was a great relief to gain the cool shelter of the narrow passage in the wall. Once within, the old man followed him and closed the door of stone, taking care that it should rest in exact position and thus keep its own secret.

Feeling his way past the fugitives, their unknown rescuer took the lead in conducting them along a short level passage, then down a flight of steps. Haskell counted one hundred and sixty of these, with two turns to the right. He could touch both walls at all times. Now they appeared to have come to a small subterranean chamber and, asking Haskell to take hold of his *bandero de stomacho*, he began to feel his way across, apparently guiding himself by the jointures of the flagging under foot, which he followed with his bare toes. Haskell heard a sudden rush of water close at hand and was conscious that everything about him was dripping wet.

"May we stop?" he said, his engineering instincts getting the better of him. The old man came to a halt, and, lighting a match, Haskell held it above his head. The dim light disclosed the four walls of a square chamber and at one side was a hewn-stone tank from which came the sound of the water. Lighting another match, the American stepped to the side of it and looked in. The mystery of the Fountain of the Tiger was solved!

At one end of the tank was the entrance for a stream of water of at least a two-foot volume—doubtless one of the underground brooks. At the other end was the exit, with a thin slab of slate that slid up and down to open and close it. In the tank floated a sealed earthen vessel. As the tank filled it rose, and when it reached a certain height the lever to which it was tethered raised the slate slab and let out the water in the tank. At the same time the rising water bore up another float that was held in place by two upright guides. This float was large enough to carry a stone weighing at least two hundred pounds. When the water was let out the weight of the descending stone bore on a rude stone piston in a stone cylinder, and the water in the cylinder was driven up through a set of stone piles like tiles to the top of the mound.

Haskell stood dumfounded before this visible evidence of the mechanical ingenuity of the priests of a civilization so long dead that there even is no certain name that it may bear.

"Come, señor, there is no time to spare!" urged the old man, and Haskell turned reluctantly away.

Across the chamber was a low doorway and another passage that ran less than three hundred feet due east, when it suddenly narrowed, the roof lowered and, on hands and knees, they proceeded a short distance to emerge in the center of a thicket.

The light of the fire was very strong all about them, and now and then they could get glimpses of the besiegers behind them. Slowly and carefully they made their way from shadow to shadow until they came to an almost impenetrable growth among the trees. The old man took Juan's henequen knife and began to hew the vines, the small branches and the entwining parasites. Haskell marveled at the ease and certainty of stroke from every conceivable angle. Also, they were nearly noiseless, and though the three proceeded very slowly and the old man cut incessantly for an hour his arm seemed never to tire or his aim to waver.

The moon was up, and where it filtered through the branches the light was of great help as they drew away from the red glow of the conflagration. At last they broke into a sort of glade, and across this was an old path which made the way easier. Some time after midnight they came to another group of ruins in the forest, the shapeless remains of three large buildings not raised on mounds, and, seeking a shelter among the dilapidated walls, the old man commanded Juan to light a fire, sat down, and drew from his girdle a cigar of excellent appearance. Haskell had been waiting for him to speak or offer some explanation for his strange appearance at the critical moment, but as he did not seem to be inclined to communicativeness, the American asked:

"Will you accept my gratitude for your sorely needed help to-night, and will you tell me how it happened that you knew of our dilemma?"

"There are many of us who would never have left the haciendas had they continued to be Ortegas. My older brother is by birth a cacique, and when a daughter of the Ortegas comes to the forest, asking shelter from the cruelty of a Calderon and seeking help for her friends, no one among us would refuse her. I was sent to get you away through the passage of which only the caciques know, as they know of other things that the oppressors never have learned and never will learn."

"And it was Señorita Ortegas y Escalendon that sent you?"

"She has forfeited her life in causing this man's flight from the hacienda, and her uncle struck her and planned to beat her strung up in the patio when he returned, so she persuaded my nephew to run away from the hacienda and bring her to us."

A queer, softened feeling seemed to smother Haskell's heart and becloud his eyes.

"Are we on our way to where she is?"

"Why should you ask us to show to a stranger the retreats which are our only hope of life until the time when we are strong enough to rise and drive the oppressors from our lands?"

Haskell saw the force of the argument and was silent a moment.

"But the señorita?—she can not go back. What is to become of her?"

"She is welcome to our poor houses in the forest as long as she lives."

A sudden resolution possessed the American, but he did not speak of it. Instead, he asked: "Where are we going now?"

"We shall rest till daylight and then I will lead you to the coast and to a village I know of there. A fisherman with a boat can take you to Cozumel and you can go home to your own country and not come back to steal our forests. We will kill you and all you bring with you if you do!"

Haskell stared hard at the stern features illuminated by the glow of the twig fire. The snores of Juan, already asleep, forgetful of the day's danger and bloodshed, were the only sounds for a minute.

"I am not a thief, *amigo*. The men who sent me are not thieves. We pay the rightful owners their own price for what we take, or we do not take it. We have paid Calderon y Ortegas much money and will pay very much more."

The old man seemed about to speak, but checked himself and, after gazing at the fire a moment, sadly said:

"The words of Nuñez Paola have been spoken. They are true and shall stand!"

Then he bowed himself by the fire, drawing one arm under him across his abdomen, and was soon asleep.

CHAPTER VII

TWO AMERICANS SHAKE HANDS

AT DAYBREAK the trio was astir and, though weak from lack of food, pushed on through the dense growth. When he was not watching the marvelous woodcraft of the old man in places that seemed impassable, Haskell was studying the trees about him—mahogany, dyewood, the several hard gum-bearing trees, the tropical cousins of the oak and the beech—hundreds of millions of feet of lumber, millions of dollars' worth of wealth.

At last, toward noon, the way before them began to lighten, and they emerged at the edge of the tract which the American had seen from the tree the day before. It was a dried salt marsh with a most peculiar consistency of soil, the very material that under former conditions would have been turned into bituminous coal. It was free from creeping vines but rich in timber, especially in mahogany and dyewood. Around the edge was a path that was traveled with some frequency apparently, and in the middle of the afternoon they came within sound of the sea.

Passing over a hummock of rotten trap at one point, Haskell used the elevation to survey the marsh, and he saw what was the occasion for its peculiar nature. It was lower than the mean sea-level, and in the rainy season would turn into a fresh lake which would force a channel through the sand ridge that separated it from the sea. The tide, invading the marsh, would make it salt until such time as the wind and waves would pack the channel with sand and débris in the beginning of the dry season, and the sun would dry up the enclosure for the six months to follow. When he had determined this he begged for a halt, and, taking an observation, figured out the position and compared it with his maps. This thirty square miles of sublevel timber land was part of his huge task. He felt his heart tighten within him.

When they reached the beach their guide turned northward, and after about two miles of tramping over the dunes they came to a cove in which an Indian fishing village nestled, embowered in palms and plantains. Within the bar rode a half-dozen fishing-boats, of the size in which the daring natives go to sea hundreds of miles. As they neared the hamlet they were descried by a swarm of naked children who ran like young partridges. Haskell was deeply absorbed in some new plans and left Juan and Nuñez Paola to make all arrangements with the villagers who gathered to see the strangers. He came to with a start just as they were entering the wattle-work hut that was to shelter them.

"Haskell! For heaven's sake! Haskell!"

On a rude settee reclined the figure of a pale, fever-burnt young man, his neglected beard and matted hair giving his face the look of one insane. The engineer turned and stood staring at the unknown under the *coiba* before the door.

"I don't expect you to know me, old chap. I'm Jack Peters!"

In an instant Haskell was grasping the thin extended hand.

"Honestly I feel as if I were talking to a dead man! Great guns, boy! how did you get here? What does this mean?"

Then Jack told him the story of which he already had glimmerings. He had reached the hacienda only three days before Haskell, having come by a different route, and when he told Don Felipe his mission, the *haciendado* had laughed and refused to credit him. Jack had shown him the papers which the brother had signed in New York and Don Felipe had gone into a terrific rage. He declared that his brother had had no right to dispose of the timber-rights—that they were the joint property of the whole family. Peters, however, was in possession of the search papers obtained from Merida, which showed that the brother was the sole trustee of the estate and the bargain legal.

Don Felipe then said that none of the interested parties would ever live to see it executed, and the following morning had inveigled the youth on the ride of which Haskell had heard, had shot him through and left him for dead in the forest. All he remembered was being borne on the shoulders of Indian bearers. He came to consciousness in the hamlet, under the care of an herb-doctor and was getting well.

When Jack had heard Haskell's story to the end he sat looking at the little red case which Haskell had given him and, after a moment's silence, put out his hand.

"Haskell, will you shake on our *getting* that fellow?"

"I'm with you and we will get him good!" said the engineer, gripping the thin palm. "But I tell you, boy, I feel there is something more behind all this than a mere quarrel between brothers over a trustee's rights."

"Señor," said a grave voice behind them, "your words are the words of the wise in some things, but of the foolish in others. Take warning and return to your own country."

It was Nuñez Paola. There was a serious gentleness in his tone that gave his utterance unusual importance.

"I—I did not know you understood English!" exclaimed Haskell.

The old man shrugged his shoulders as he turned away and said: "I was General Hernando Ortegas' body-servant at Oxford, fifty years ago—and I wrote his lessons for him."

Silently they watched him as he strode away.

"Say, Haskell," said the convalescent in a lowered tone, "we think we are a smart people up home, but I will bet that a lot of these old Mayas could give us cards and spades!"

WHEN Haskell awoke the next morning after restful slumber and attacked the steaming breakfast Juan placed before him, he missed the old Maya and asked for him. Juan shook his head:

"He struck inland at daybreak, some cakes inside his jacket, and he bade me say to you, señor, that you are commanded finally to take the young señor and go back to your own country and come here no more."

The little withered man nearly dropped the leaf on which he was serving the fried plantains when Haskell made his comment, but in a moment the big American laughed, ate his breakfast and, lighting a cigar, said:

"Juan, go out and tell every able-bodied man you see that I want him to work for me, and I will give him five dollars silver a day for a month."

"Oh, señor, señor, ask me not this thing! They will lash me for lying to them!"

"Why, hang it! I mean it. Go do as I tell you. Also, if you will stay with me, that is your wage-rate from this time on, but let me tell you there is going to be more work and fewer *fiestas* in this corner of the republic than there has ever been before!"

In ten minutes' time there was a wildly excited mob of a hundred men before the hut, and in the background were the women and children. Haskell, with Jack leaning on his arm, walked out under the *coiba* and told them what he wanted. He picked out twenty men who could handle axes and sent them into the forest to cut young trees for piles. He picked out eight men who were boat-builders and set them to constructing four ten-foot barges. Half of the others were to get the piles out of the woods to the beach, and the other half were detailed as shovelers, with the exception of two men who understood carpentry and masonry. These he held for further orders.

In an hour's time the ordered work was under way and he was showing the carpenters how to build a pile-driver, using a block of granite for the hammer, with guiding grooves chiseled in the sides and a big drum windlass on which to draw it up. Not being ready to use the shovelers yet, he led them down the beach to the point where the three had come to tide-water the day before, and set them to building a working camp. That evening he wrote a long cablegram to the firm and at dawn one of the boats put to sea to carry it to Cozumel.

CHAPTER VIII

WAR AND ENGINEERING

ONE week later Jack Peters was strong enough to transfer himself down to the working camp, and there he found a work under way that made him yell and whoop. Beginning at low-water mark a double line of piles was being driven inland entirely across the beach ridge that barricaded the sea from the dried marsh. The rows were twenty feet apart. In the firmest part of the ridge the masons and carpenters were building a wooden sluice-gate, set in stone blocks. Its lowest level was low-water mark. The shovelers were at work taking out the sand on the landward side of the gate, as they had taken out all but a small part on the seaward side, to a level three feet below high-water mark.

"Do you mean you are really going to try to do a thing like that, Haskell?"

"Wait just half an hour and see. The tide is coming up now." And he left the enthusiastic youngster to marshal more men on the landward work. Peters watched the tide creep up to near the three-foot sub-level and then he saw Haskell coming back, taking a shovel from a workman as he came.

"Open the gates and lash them!" cried the engineer, and he watched the water narrowly as the gates were made ready. Then, wading in at the edge of the water, he threw a narrow channel through the slender sand barrier and saw the first rush of the sea-water through the canal, which was still two-thirds choked with sand. Steadily the speed and volume of the rivulet grew as the tide increased. One foot wide, two feet wide, four feet wide—more and more the sea-water, rushing inland, dug down and sideways into the sand, and a yellow, sand-laden, boiling flood tumbled into the nearest reaches of the marsh, spreading the sand ripped out from between the piling over a wide area.

Then at last the tide was at maximum and began to ebb. In half an hour the water that had flowed in with a mad rush came out with decreased volume, and by the middle of the afternoon the canal stood revealed, two rows of glistening piling with every grain of sand and soil washed out down to low-water level. Now Haskell ordered the gates closed and all cracks sealed for the time being. Inland the floor of the marsh, as far as could be seen, was covered with a coating of wet sand that would not interfere with the lumbering in the least when dried, but would make a far cleaner and better foundation than the salt peat of the bog. When he understood the whole thing, the younger man clapped an arm around the elder and said:

"How I would like to see Uncle John watching this! He would have four joy-spasms a minute. It is great, Haskell, it is great!"

"He is wondering just about now what I want with twenty saws to work from barges, twenty donkey-engines to run them, three tow-boats and everything needed to get the lumber in the water, trim the logs, get them through the canal and tow them in rafts to steamer-side to be heaved inboard."

"Didn't you explain how you were going to do it?"

"No. John Peters doesn't want explanations before or after."

"Great guns, Haskell, that must mean a forty per cent. saving, F.O.B.!"

"Nearer sixty, Jack!"

"On thirty miles—let me see—" his voice trailed off to a murmured following of his mental calculation, till suddenly he clutched Haskell by the arm and said almost aghast, "Why, man alive, that means *thirty million dollars!*"

"About forty million, lad, when we figure the saving in getting out the timber farther inland by dredging a five-foot canal on from the inland water-mark. But we are not through yet, lad. I thought it wise to put an order for one hundred rifles, with three hundred rounds each, in the requisition, and I am sorry, from something I saw last night, that I did not order them shipped by special steamer from Kingston "

"You saw something last night?"

"Yes, some time about midnight Juan waked me and I ran to the window just in time to see two men drop into the dry side of the canal, after inspecting the gate, and sneak off inland."

"Two white men?"

"No, two Mayas, and both were armed —rifle, pistol and knife."

Peters whistled significantly and then asked: "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Just this. I am going to leave you in camp to-morrow, and I want you to trench both sides of the ridge to defend the gate, and to start a timber stockade north side of the camp—timbers that will stop high-velocity, subcaliber bullets. Have the masons build a tank that will hold a thousand gallons of water and put it under cover; then dig a cellar in the sand, lined with masonry, that will hold three or four boatloads of provisions. I am going upshore for provisions, all the arms in the village and all the fresh water I can float back."

"Why don't you send a messenger to telegraph the Governor, if there is going to be any trouble?"

"It would take ten days to get a detachment of *regionales* here, and I would rather have twenty of these fishermen than five hundred of those poor convicts, half-dead from fever and homesickness. Also, if it is Don Felipe that is threatening us, his cousin is the Governor. If it is the Mayas from the woods—well, the Government never has been able to get the best of them and I believe I would rather handle the situation myself."

IT WAS late the next afternoon when Haskell had his boats loaded and the sun was creeping down in the west. The dozen men he had taken with him were waiting at the water's edge to put off and, as he stood talking to the aged headman of the village, he called out to the boats to proceed, with the exception of the lighter and swifter one.

The sound of horses' hoofs at the rear of the village! A party of horsemen riding through the gardens scattering the chickens and children!

"Don Felipe! The mercy of heaven!" cried the old man.

Haskell threw his hand to his hip. His gun was in the boat! They had not seen him yet. He stepped within the doorway, saying:

"Lie for me, father, till I can get to the boat!"

"Oya, you old beggar!" cried Calderon y Ortegas, riding up and taking a playful slash at the patriarch of the village with a freshly cut withe. "How does it happen that the vultures have not got you yet? Where are the boys?"

"All are working down the shore with the Señor Haskell, Don Felipe."

"Where are those boats going?"

"They are taking my children food and water, Don Felipe."

"Call them back, before I brain you!"

The old man pretended to call in his cracked voice, but it was too feeble to carry to the beach, so Don Felipe roared his own mandates. The two were already beyond the reach of his voice, and the men in the third that waited for Haskell showed signs of fear and gave no indication of putting out. The *haciendado* cursed and threatened dire vengeance, stopping only to ask:

"Is there a girl here, or down there with this —— American?"

"No, Don Felipe. I have seen no women this year but my own children."

"I hear they are cutting down my timber and are digging in my land. What is he trying to do?"

"I do not know, Don Felipe, but he is building things on the sands by the water."

"I shall go down to see."

Evidently the two spies were not Don Felipe's men, thought Haskell.

"The Señor Peters says they will soon have ships here loading timber."

"Señor Peters! Do I hear your words? A lad of little more than twenty?"

"The same, Don Felipe. He came to my house wounded and grew well here."

The *haciendado* ground his teeth in his rage and, turning to his elder son, said:

"Now, do you see what we must do, and do at once?"

Plainly he feared that, his attempt to kill young Peters having been open and indefensible, if Peters or Haskell were left alive long enough to get in touch with the American consul at Merida, the Governor would be forced to act. Peering through the wattle-work, Haskell could see the son nodding his head in acquiescence.

"It seems that we rode over none too soon. Now bring us the best you have, you old dog, for we are hungry, and then we will go down where these *gringo* scoundrels are playing in my sand!"

The party dismounted and Haskell counted them quickly—Don Felipe, the son and four *mozos*. The *mozos* had no firearms, and the two white men left their carbines slung in *rurale* fashion on their horses. The son carried his heavy pistol in a saddle holster, and Don Felipe had his holster flap buttoned over the pistol at his belt. One of the *mozos* led the horses under a tree and stood them with their heads together, untethered. The old man, seeing they were about to enter the house, and knowing that there was no hiding-place within for Haskell, was trying to divert them by asking Don Felipe to choose his fowls from those about.

Haskell determined on a desperate course of action. Don Felipe was within three feet of the doorway with his back turned. Stepping quickly to his side, Haskell snatched both holster and pistol from his belt and, as the bulky *haciendado* wheeled to face the attack, drove his fist with terrific force squarely in the center of the repulsive face, hurling him back on the son so that both staggered into the midst of the *mozos*. Don Felipe slipped to the ground, bathed in blood.

Trying to get out the pistol as he ran, Haskell made for the nearest horse, the *mozos* now close on his heels, and, through surprise, he had gained enough lead to leap into the saddle, strike the other horses right and left and send them stampeding. He galloped through the village, shouting to the third boat to put away and make haste to the camp.

Relieved from the fear of Don Felipe's carbine, the men pulled away with a will, and Haskell turned to note the stage of the pursuit. One of the *mozos* was ahorse and another was coming on with speed afoot. Drawing the carbine and making sure of the charge, he checked his horse and fired once—twice—thrice. The first shot stopped the runner in a pile in the dust. At the third the mounted *mozo* reeled in the saddle and the American rode on.

He could not go down the beach to the camp. He could only follow the road toward the hacienda until he found a good spot to enter for a détour that would bring him out on the northern edge of the dried marsh, which he could follow back to camp.

CHAPTER IX

A PRISONER

IT WAS very nearly dark when he reached the path he had followed with Juan and Nuñez Paola the previous month, and as he turned toward the sea he moved with care. Twice the horse shied and Haskell thought he saw dim blurs of white off among the trees. Once he drew rein and thought of tethering his horse and proceeding on foot on account of the sound of the horse's hoofs, but, laughing at himself for fearing any enemy in this quarter, he started to ride on. From out the growth on every hand appeared a dozen white shapes, two steel rifle-barrels were thrust in his face and strong hands were laid on his horse's bits!

Haskell laughed bitterly.

"Good evening, *amigos*. What does this mean?" he asked.

"*Buenas tardes*, Señor Haskell," said a familiar voice. "We were told not to shoot you, but you are riding one of Don Felipe's horses, and in the dark many things might happen."

The speaker felt carefully as he spoke for arms other than the pistol and carbine and then turned the horse in the trail.

"Who are you?" cried Haskell. "Why do you hold me up this way if you are enemies of Don Felipe? I have just escaped from him in the village. He nearly got me. Where are you taking me?"

"The fool seeks information of the ignorant, señor; the wise man takes counsel with his own eyes and ears."

The triteness of the proverb struck an odd note. It precipitated Haskell's own philosophical resignation to this new and astounding development and he drew out a cigar, lighted it and in silence allowed himself to be led inland without further protest. For a half-hour they marched with surprisingly little noise, and then encountered another body of men, at least twenty in number, moving in the opposite direction and apparently well armed. A signal word was exchanged and the two parties passed.

Another hour of silence, then the man leading the horse turned aside by a certain white, barkless tree, and after a few minutes' difficult passage through the dense growth, two men parting the way before the horse, they came into an open space and Haskell smelled fresh wood-smoke but could see no fire. There was also the sound of running water, but there was no stream nor a depressed channel for one.

The man in advance sounded the peculiar note of the *canillan* bird twice, and it seemed to be answered from directly below them. A flaming torch appeared, almost under their feet. A naked Maya boy carried it, and Haskell saw they were on the edge of a great hole forty feet deep and at least one hundred across. The boy had stepped forth from a sort of cave at the bottom. By the light of the torch the horse was led down a winding trail from shelf to shelf of the sides and when the lower level was reached, Haskell was asked to dismount and saw the horse led away to a second hole in the earth.

"Enter, señor," said the familiar voice, and now by the light of the torch the engineer saw that the leader of his captors was 'Nacion from the hacienda. His heart sank within until he noted that the other men were of a far wilder type than the *mozos* of the hacienda.

Haskell stepped into the cave and saw that it was a water-worn causeway into the earth.

"You can not pass out this door," said 'Nacion, pointing to the two men who guarded it. Haskell made the mental reservation that he certainly would do so the first opportunity that was half-way healthful. The old channel turned and a strong blast of wood-smoke struck him just as a great sight was revealed.

Before him opened a huge oblong enclosure more than three hundred feet in its greatest dimension, the roof of limestone supported in many places by natural pillars of rock, and in the light of the fires that glowed here and there moved hundreds of men, women, children and dogs. Close at hand was a chasm, and at the bottom roared the underground river. Plainly this had once been its channel on this level, but it had broken through to a new one some fifty feet lower, leaving an ideal place of concealment for such a band as this—a band of the wild Mayas of the forest and their runaway peon recruits. Most of them had only rudimentary clothes and no weapons but the crooked henequen knives and the straight woodman's machetes, and all of these seemed worn.

Cries heralded the arrival of the party, and there was a rush from all sides; a wall of gleaming bronze bodies, serried rows of curious dark eyes, formed on either hand in a twinkling and Haskell found himself noting the difference between this reception and that which would have been accorded in the village of American blanket Indians.

On the far side of the big chamber some matted vines and cloths had been combined to make screened chambers and to one of these the engineer was conducted, to find himself in the presence of an old but erect and virile man sitting on a tiger-skin, a flat earthen dish of fat by his side with a lighted wick thrust in it. He was smoking a thick black cheroot and removed it to bow gravely as Haskell entered and his captors retired.

"I am Nuñez José, Señor Haskell, chief of the Itzchen-Maya. I grieve to see you here. My brother was sent to save you from one of our oppressors and lead you to the sea, that you might leave our country, where you have no right. You were told to go, and told that you could not despoil our forest, our last retreat, and yet you would not be warned. Now we must deal with you—not to punish you, for we have no right to do so, but to protect ourselves against you and all men from your country.

"You are a prisoner and you can not escape. Because of the bravery you have shown, because of the good heart you have shown to our people, you are to be a prisoner until we leave this spot, and then you must die. We can not let you go free. We can not be burdened with guarding you. You have brought this on your own head, for you were fully warned. These are the words of a chief. You will go now, and food will be given you."

While the old man had been speaking, calmly and without feeling, Haskell had thought of a number of things to say, but when he heard his sentence and saw the logic of it from the tribe's point of view he realized that it would be hopeless to enter into any argument or to make any appeal. The chances were a thousand to one against him, but he must take his respite to find that one chance and, with the words of dismissal, he bowed gravely and turned to leave the chamber almost as if in a dream, the whole situation seemed so unreal.

The curious crowd without had turned away to its own pursuits, it being the time of the preparation of the evening meal, and Haskell stopped to note a woman rolling some beans in a shallow stone mortar with a stone pestle the size of a large grapefruit.

"Señor," said 'Nacion's voice, "it is prayed that you follow me."

Threading their way among the merry family groups, the two passed, leaving the illuminated portion of the enclosure behind, until Haskell saw before him against the farther wall more of the screening mats and cloths.

Lifting aside the green curtain of one more or less isolated, the *mozo* bowed in the engineer. In an earthen vessel used as a brazier glowed fresh coals, and on a flat stone at one side were some fresh cakes, the odor of which came pleasantly to his nostrils. Beside them lay some dried meat, and near by a leaf laden with fruit and a cool dripping *olla*. Carelessly Haskell noted that at one side was a rude pallet of boughs and twigs woven so as to make an excellent bed, and over it was thrown what seemed a *serape* in soft colors.

Encarnacion stood to attend him and, thrusting aside all thoughts of the evil lines in which he had fallen, he ate heartily.

Almost completed was his meal when a gleam of something among the twigs of the narrow pallet caught his eye and, reaching over, he drew it forth—a little coral and silver beaded rosary with a medallion engraved with "Emalia Rosanna Ortegas y Escalendon."

The rosary she had worn as she rode to his help!

"'Nacion," he said breathlessly, "is this the Señorita Emalia's chamber?"

"It is now for you, señor."

"And she?"

"The señorita will be with my sister."

On the cake in his hands he now saw the unmistakable print of her little fingers! It seemed that the mouthful he had been about to swallow would choke him, and sudden, surprising hot tears sprang to his eyes. He bent his head lest the *mozo* should see.

"Will you bring her, 'Nacion?" he said huskily, and when the Indian had gone, he stared at the coals, while between them and his eyes rose the vision of a queenly, haughty slip of a girl poised proudly on the steps of the ancient hacienda stair, the stair at the portal of her ancestral home.

A rustle of the vines!

Springing to his feet he faced her and noted, beyond her, the sister of 'Nacion standing with crossed hands and dropped eyes as becomes the duenna. The two approached, his eyes bent intently on her face in which the color rose and fled in quick alternation, her eyes wavering away but coming back constantly to his as if compelled, while her fingers tugged childishly at the seams of the sides of her native riding-garb. More than two arms' length apart they paused, and there was a little silence.

CHAPTER X

LOVE AND A PLEA FOR LIFE

"SENORITA, it is strange that we meet here, but it is the blessing of heaven that I see you again at all. It is not enough that I twice owe you my life; that you have suffered cruelly at the hands of your own flesh and blood to save a stranger; that you have even cut yourself off from your home and come to a life among savages? Is all that not enough, that you should seek to thrust on me your poor little comforts, and—and with your own hands do for me what there was no one else to do?"

"And you are angry, señor?" she quavered, the hurt tears in her eyes.

"Angry! No, you beloved child, no! —only my heart melted within me. *You* were angry with *me.* Do you remember? I could not help loving you at once, angry as you were, and now——"

She had pressed her hands palm to palm on her breast. A look of amazed, half-incredulous rapture stole over her face at his words, and a slow smile of incomparable sweetness dwelt on her parted lips.

He faltered and moved toward her, his hands outstretched, eager inquiry and the adoration of a strong man blended in his face.

"Why—*why,* little Emalia, did you do this for me?"

She yielded herself into his arms with a little sigh that caught in her throat almost like a sob, and presently she answered:

"Because I, too, have loved you since I first saw you, and it was sweeter than anything I have ever done in my whole life to work for you!"

* * *

IN A LITTLE while some flash of remembrance of conventions cut into the dream of her love, and she drew away from him shamefacedly, glancing at the patient figure by the door, then she laughed merrily.

"I forgot that I had no one to reprove me but myself. Now I am yours and I may love you as much as I can love, and it is all without wrong or *your* reproof—is it not wholly good?"

The sweet phrases made his heart thrill.

"It is—it is wholly good!" he answered with reverent earnestness.

In the light of fresh twigs placed on the brazier they sat and talked of the present situation. He took counsel with her as the American does with his wife and true love, and she was amazed and proud beyond utterance, but when the whole matter had been reviewed she said:

"You should have gone when I told you. You should have gone when 'Nacion told you. You should have obeyed Nuñez Paola. Your *compania* has no right to take these trees, and I am sure of it, because I know that whoever gave them to my father, my grandfather and his father had no right to do so. They belong to the Itzchen-Maya."

"This forest was your father's. How did

it come into the hands of the Calderon y Ortegas?"

"I do not know. My uncles told me that it did—that is all I know. But it was not right. It belongs to these people here in this *cenote*. There is no way for you or no help for you, beloved; you must die. They will soon move on—and I will die with you!"

She smiled as if glad that she might. Haskell shuddered and thought desperately.

"You say that they will move on? Where are they going?" he asked.

"They will soon be *insurrecto* again," she answered almost blithely. "Twice since the great war they have risen, and each time they were beaten because they did not have enough arms. But now all Yucatan is with them except a few rich *haciendados*, and when the Mexicans are driven out Yucatan will be free again. All good Yucatecos admire the Mayas, but they are not so brave as the men of the forest or they would give them the money for arms. They have surrounded your camp to drive you out, take you and Señor Peters captive and kill you because you are going to take the forests, and then they will march on Valladolid, killing the Maya-hating *haciendados* and taking their arms and horses, but not harming the haciendas of the others. They will wipe out Calderon y Ortegas first of all."

A great light broke on Haskell. Fear of provoking the Mayas was what had caused the cunning Don Felipe, who knew the imminence of a rising, to repudiate his brother's contract and to discourage the syndicate, as he imagined, by doing away with its agents, as fast as they came, in such a way that the murders could not be laid at his door but would be blamed on the Mayas. Rising with sudden resolve, he gathered the girl once more in his arms and said:

"You must remain here. I am going to talk of this thing to Nuñez José, and perhaps—well, when I come back we shall talk more."

All but a few of the Mayas were asleep and, studying them with interest as he picked his way among them, Haskell reached the chamber in which he had confronted Nuñez José, and encountered the old chief sitting before the door. Hardly had the American begun to state his extraordinary mission before the chief raised his hand, stopped him and sent two boys scurrying to summon his brother Nuñez Paola and all the elders of the tribe not away stirring up the Mayas on the plantations.

It was an hour, perhaps, before all were assembled in the chamber, seated on the ground around the grease-lamp. Haskell cast his eyes around the circle, and with admiration noted the fine features of many, the size and intelligence of their eyes, and the wisdom written on their brows. What a race their forefathers must have been in their heyday! At last Nuñez José commanded him to speak, saying:

"Son of strangers, speak to the fathers of my children; tell the poor remnant of the family of the Great Serpent the thoughts of thy white man's mind and the wishes of a heart that we know to be brave and strong."

There is a certain sort of training which encourages the man trained to use a map or to draw as he speaks or thinks, and following this impulse Haskell stepped to a smooth spot on the white limestone wall and with a piece of rotten yellow stone began to draw. While they watched they saw him create an accurate outline of "The Hook" of the North American continent, marking in the wilderness and dotting in the towns in the developed and cultivated region. The only words spoken while he worked were little exclamations of comment.

When it was complete, he turned and spoke to them, clearly pointing out their location, showing how they were cut off naturally, leading on to the conclusion that by the designs of nature the peninsula and the lands east of the mountains were a region unto themselves—the natural heritage of the Maya people. At this there was approval from every side. He passed to the natural wealth of this region and showed how its greatest wealth, the hardwoods and the chicle of the forest, could be drawn on forever by careful use, if the users did not destroy the forest.

He then entered into the question of territorial rights, of the oppression of the Mexicans and the pro-Mexican *haciendados*, and of the fate of the Maya people if they continued to allow themselves to be forced back into the forest or if they submitted to the peonage system and became absorbed in the great body of Mexican economic serfs. Then he spoke of the Aztecs, the Toltecs, the Tehuantepecs, now crushed forever, and of the Yaquis' brave fight for three hundred years. The thing to do, however, was not to fight the Mexican and his civilization, but to return all Mayas to the plane of civilization which they once enjoyed and to make the peninsula a Maya land once more. Guerrilla warfare would not do this; ravage and pillage would lead to no good ends. There was great wealth in the forest and in the uncleared lands that would grow henequen to raise the whole Maya people to eminence—if Yucatan were all Maya.

"I came to your country believing that I had a right to take these trees, that right having come through Calderon y Ortegas, and the right is one which the Government would enforce with its troops against Don Felipe and against you. But have I sent for troops to come to fight you? On the other hand, do you not see that if you take my life the Government must take extreme measures, or my own more powerful country will do so? Must I explain to you that the men who sent me may not learn the rights and wrongs of things as I have learned them?

"Listen to my plan. You are not averse to toil, if you are well paid. I will provide labor and pay for every Maya man who will have it. We will work together and from the profits a share shall go to the chiefs of the Mayas that will soon make a fund that will allow the Mayas to come again to their own. There is wealth enough for me to keep faith at the same time with Calderon y Ortegas. In a few days my ships will arrive off the coast. Even now the first may be there, and they will have aboard the arms which you need to carry out your plans of driving back the *haciendados* who have encroached on your lands without rights. Those arms you may have, but if you kill me you can not get them. With all this in mind, I ask you: Will you delay your revolution till you are fitted for it—perhaps many years from this time? Will you confine your insurrection to the punishment of *haciendados* who deserve it? Will you work with me in getting out the wealth of these trees without destroying your forest? Will you enrich yourselves, and will you spare my life?"

There was no question but that the gathering was greatly impressed. There was an uncertain silence and then Nuñez José signed to Haskell that he had better withdraw while they deliberated. Just before the engineer reached the door, a middle-aged man whose face bore a strong resemblance to that of Cromwell said:

"We have heard the words of a white man, of a stranger, one who is not any part of us and has no interest in this land except to despoil it—will he tell us why we should trust him, what sympathy he has with this land?"

Haskell turned in the doorway:

"Fathers of the Itzchen-Maya, as soon as I may, I shall wed the Señorita Ortegas y Escalendon!"

A look of surprise, one of pleasure, apparently, passed around the circle, and Haskell stepped out. He had been pacing up and down before the door but a few minutes when he was summoned within.

"My son," said Nuñez José, "return to-night to your camp by the sea. To-morrow messengers will start to our people in the west and we will await the fulfilment of your promises. Encarnacion and ten men will go outside and remain with you till you can give us such arms as you do not need."

It seemed to Haskell that a sudden load had been lifted from his heart, and when he left the place and crossed to the chamber where he had left Emalia he repressed a boyish desire to run.

She was sitting by the brazier, her wealth of hair about her shoulders, and she was just beginning to braid it. The vessels in which the meal had been cooked and served were cleaned and set in a neat row, and there was such a little air of domestication about the almost bare room that he marveled till he saw that it was the visible expression of the spirit that pervaded her.

Brightly as she smiled at the sight of him, there was anxious inquiry in her eyes which his very manner answered as he caught her to him, and when he told her the outcome of the conference she merely pressed her face close to him and said:

"Almost would I rather that you were to remain here and die than that you were to leave me!"

IN KEEPING with the other new emotions that had come to him, Haskell was surprised to feel the great tug at his heart-strings when he said good-by to her. It was not to be for long—only till he could have a fit abode erected for them, and until a boat could be sent to Cozumel for a priest.

She went with him to the entrance of the *cenote* and watched as far as she could see, and Haskell called back to her that he would soon return, little knowing of all that must intervene.

CHAPTER XI

THE SIEGE

THE moon was up. and riding was not difficult. About an hour before dawn they were within the sound of the sea, after having passed two bodies of the Mayas making their way back to the *cenote.* Suddenly, from the locality of the camp, a dozen quick shots sounded, one or two wild yells and then silence. With a word to 'Nacion, Haskell put spurs to his horse and the entire party dashed ahead at reckless speed.

When they came into the open, firing broke out again from the ridge to the north of the camp, and bullets whistled around them. One of the men gave a cry and his bridle-arm fell limp. The fire was returned from the camp and, to be sure that the men there did not mistake his arrival for an attack, Haskell began calling to Peters and Juan, galloping madly ahead as he did so. Soon they were under shelter among the buildings and saw about them in the moonlight a half dozen men crouched under cover at points of vantage armed with a variety of nondescript weapons. Haskell noted one horse-pistol of the period of Maximilian.

"By George, Haskell!" cried Peters, springing up from behind a log. "Where did you come from? I thought you were done for, sure!"

Briefly Haskell told him what had happened. He spoke in Spanish so that the men might hear.

"Well, we have been having a —— of a time here. Old Bluebeard did not come around from that punch you gave him till about midnight, I suppose, but they had sent at once to the hacienda and to two others up the coast for reenforcements, and they are just starting in to clean us out, with the first arrivals, I suppose. We are using all the arms we have, and I kept two men to every weapon, telling the others to sneak back to the village, as they would be no good as targets here, and if they were in the village as neutrals and vowed they were unfriendly to us, Don Felipe might not burn their houses or hurt their women and children. The scheme must have worked, for Juan, who sneaked in with them and then back with the news I have told you, says that the hacienda people did not molest them. I believe we are going to have a regular devil-party as soon as it gets daylight."

"I wish I had had sense enough to foresee this before I left the Mayas," was Haskell's comment as he turned away to inspect the defenses. "To think of this going on here and me letting forty armed men pass me, bound inland, five miles away!"

There had not been time to get the food and water properly stowed and two of the big water-jars were shattered and another pair were pierced with bullets. By the time dawn had begun to show, Haskell was sure of the plan of his defense, and three of the men who had come with him were in the growth at the foot of the ridge with the useless horses, ready to ride back to the *cenote* as soon as the moon passed under a cloudbank rising in the south. Now the moment was come and, with a faint rustle of the undergrowth and a noise of hoofs that seemed to Haskell far louder than it should have been, they were off.

They had reached the point from which Haskell first saw the sea, when a sheet of flame burst out of the piles of trap-rock. Don Felipe's forces had been sufficiently augmented for him to throw a line completely around the camp! Down went two of the riderless horses and in a moment the cavalcade had wheeled and come careering back. When half way one of the men reeled in the saddle and fell into a bush, where he lay like a rag spread out to dry. The loose horses were running free over the upland and the marsh. The two Mayas bent low and, riding hard, made for the camp, covered by the fire of Haskell's men. One went down with his horse on top of him and the other fell into Encarnacion's arms. The man in the bush was struggling to rise, but fell back.

The engineer, throwing down his carbine and ripping off his pistol and belt, leaped over the low defenses and, running bent and zigzagging, reached the bush, lifted the man out and came staggering in with him, while from right and left on the ridge and from the posts inland at least fifty rifles and pistols crackled merrily. When he was safe inside with his burden the Mayas sent up a wild yell of pride and exultation, and there was an answer from the line of the enemy, *three round cheers and a "Viva Haskell!"*

"Maybe they don't know a good thing when they see it!" said Peters, refilling his magazine.

"But I would rather they had yelled loud enough to reach the ears of Nuñez José!" panted Haskell. "It is getting too bright for any man to try to get through on foot, Jack, and there must be a hundred of them out there. We have eighteen men, seven rifles and nine pistols. And will you look up there!"

In the first light two sailboats could be seen coming down the coast, the reflected flash of arms showing among the scores of men that crowded them.

"But see here, Haskell, suppose they do kill us off; you know there is such a thing as law in this country after all. This will make a big muss."

"No, Jack, I have learned that Yucateco *haciendados* stand by each other. All that Don Felipe will have to prove is that I assaulted him, disarmed him and nearly killed him and then that I and my men resisted arrest from an entrenched camp. The American State Department is accustomed to swallowing tales like that. If we were British subjects there would have been a gunboat flying the flag of St. George in the offing this very minute."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?"

"Fight!"

All day long under the burning sun the little band, keeping close under cover, fired at every movement of the enemy in the bush, and every time a rifle spoke after a half-hour's stillness a veritable shower of bullets would hurtle over the camp, spat against the defenses and throw up little spurts of sand about. Only three found human targets. One of the men from the village had a wound in the shoulder; Jack Peters had the back of his left hand seared, and once, when the Maya who had ridden back wounded raised from his couch in his delirium, a bullet, coming through the wattle-work, had struck him fairly and he fell back, his suffering at an end.

In the early part of the day it was plain that the attacking party was interested in perfecting the investiture, but when they attempted to advance they were driven off the bare ridge to the north and south, and gradually the main body massed in the thick cover to landward, the low bushes of the dried marsh affording excellent cover.

Utilizing the first darkness, two swimmers struck out from camp and, assembling driftwood up the beach, simultaneously started two chains of fire and then swam back safely. This was in accordance with a plan of Haskell's. About two hours after sunset he saw that what he had foreseen was coming to pass. The increasing fire from the landward, though it was doing no harm, signified an added activity there and an effort to cover some movement.

"Direct all your fire to the right!" was his order.

"Gee!" responded Jack Peters insubordinately. "Are you going to let those fellows down there do as they please?"

"Wait and see, Jack, wait and see," replied Haskell.

A little after midnight there were whistles and signal-calls from the bush, then some shouted orders, and with wild yells the mass of the enemy now assembled in the marsh broke into the open, dashing forward for a grand assault.

"Here they come!" cried Peters with a groan. "I guess it's good-by, old man!"

He was pumping away with his carbine, and suddenly stopped short at the sight of Haskell dashing to the sluice-gate and throwing his weight against the levers. The tide was nearly at its full height and with a roar the water poured in on the very ground over which the attack was advancing—great yellow overwhelming waves.

There were wild shouts of triumph and derision from the defenders, cries of fear from the hacienda men. Those in the rear had time to withdraw, but the van was caught among the bushes, and their own confusion militated against their escape. It was not likely that there would be much loss of life, save among those who could not swim, but their arms went down out of sight in the water. By the light of the fires men could be seen struggling in the yellow swirl in the undergrowth, and the two Americans forebore to fire on them in their helplessness.

Suddenly little old withered Juan gave a shriek of joy. He had descried something the others had not seen—a bearded man tangled in some vines, with the water rising about him. Into the water up to his armpits went the little man, breasting his way toward the struggler, shouting as he went:

"Your cripple is coming, Don Felipe! Your cripple is coming, Don Felipe!"

Don Felipe heard and struggled the harder, tearing free and striking out for the ridge below the gate as the nearest dry land. Close after him came the little red demon of vengeance, and as the *haciendado* found a footing and turned to face his erstwhile peon, Juan struck with his henequen blade, and the heavy steel sank deep in the neck of Calderon y Ortegas. Now they clinched in a death-struggle and rolled over and over together into deeper and deeper water, and neither reappeared. The cripple's debt was paid.

From far inland came several long blasts as if from a horn and then a burst of shots.

"The Itzchen-Maya! The Itzchen-Maya" cried Encarnacion and the men with him, and in a few minutes, with a roar of hoofs, the crackle of rifles and yells of victory, they came into view. In every direction the hacienda men were in flight, and by moonrise the battle was over. As the tide receded the joyous defenders flocked to the canal to catch the hats by the dozen that came floating out, evidences of the completeness of the rout.

AT DAWN Haskell put his men to work to assemble the wounded and transport them to the village. He found pleasure in the small loss of life, and turned away with a shudder when the men brought in two bodies—that of a massive bearded man locked tight in the arms of a little withered one, the latter with his thin lips drawn back in a fixed smile.

"Look, señor, look!" cried 'Nacion, pointing up the shore.

Haskell turned and beheld a steamer flying a signal and steaming swiftly down the shore. At her peak floated the flag of the syndicate's shipping lines, and when she dropped anchor and a boat put off from her he was overcome with surprise to see standing in the bow, scanning the shore and the signs of battle through binoculars —John J. Peters, Sr.!

An hour later, as they sat over their camp breakfast and Haskell had finished his relation of events, with Jack Peters now and then interposing credit where credit was due, Peters, Sr., said:

"Haskell, you remember that I told you I was banking on you personally. Well, I guess I win. I knew when I got your requisitions that I would, and I made a bet with the president. I bet ten per cent. of the costs against ten per cent. of the net on this deal and, since I win, I turn it over to you. Clean this up right now, and you will be ahead close to two million. Stay right here on the job."

"I want a day or two to attend to a little personal matter——"

"Uncle John, don't you understand that there is a wedding due?"

"Oh, yes, of course, of course, and while I am about it I may as well tell you this land properly belongs to the Ortegas heirs anyhow—the Calderon brothers flim-flammed them when Ortegas died, and the future Mrs. Haskell, being the last of the family, why, I shall want to make a new contract with her as soon as she comes to camp. You had better send for her at once."

IT WAS dusk when Nuñez Paola rode down with Emalia and the sister of Encarnacion, and that evening John J. Peters, Sr., strolled over to the spot where the two stood looking out at the steamer swinging at anchor.

"Miss Ortegas," he said "it just struck me that sea captains have power to perform marriage ceremonies. How would you like to go aboard to-morrow morning and have it over with and then spend your honeymoon on the *Colleen Bawn* while she lies out there this month? You see, I need Haskell here every day now. What do you say?"

She blushed rose-red and turned her face away to hide it against Haskell's arm.

"I Spy Kellogg's"

"Won its Favor
Through its Flavor."
Made from selected white corn.

Kellogg's
TOASTED
CORN
FLAKES
NONE GENUINE WITHOUT THIS SIGNATURE
W.K.Kellogg
KELLOGG TOASTED CORN FLAKE CO.
BATTLE CREEK, MICH.
The sweetheart of the corn
W.K.Kellogg

NONE GENUINE WITHOUT THIS SIGNATURE

W. K. Kellogg

Kellogg Toasted Corn Flake Co., Battle Creek, Mich.
Canadian Trade Supplied by the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flakes Co., L't'd, London, Ont.

All the Music of all the World

is at the command of the owner of the Columbia. It is the one perfect, complete musical instrument, the one ideal home entertainer for all the household, for all the year around.

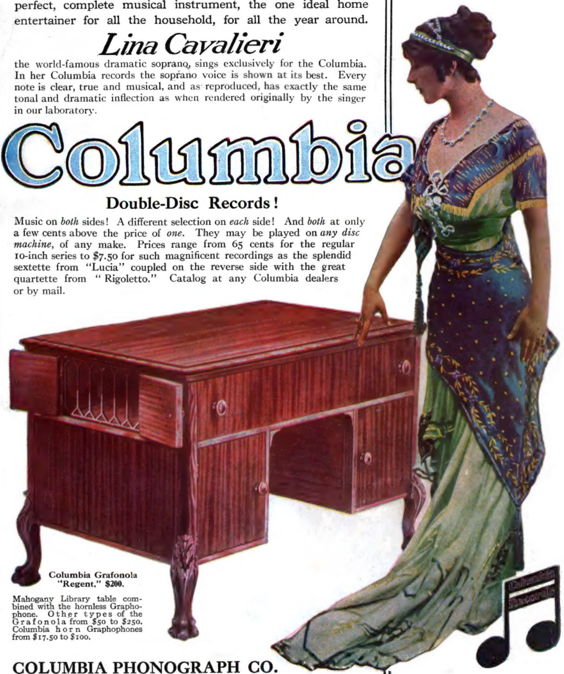
Lina Cavalieri

the world-famous dramatic soprano, sings exclusively for the Columbia. In her Columbia records the soprano voice is shown at its best. Every note is clear, true and musical, and as reproduced, has exactly the same tonal and dramatic inflection as when rendered originally by the singer in our laboratory.

Columbia

Double-Disc Records!

Music on *both* sides! A different selection on *each* side! And *both* at only a few cents above the price of *one*. They may be played on *any disc machine*, of any make. Prices range from 65 cents for the regular 10-inch series to $7.50 for such magnificent recordings as the splendid sextette from "Lucia" coupled on the reverse side with the great quartette from "Rigoletto." Catalog at any Columbia dealers or by mail.



Columbia Grafonola "Regent," $200.

Mahogany Library table combined with the hornless Graphophone. Other types of the Grafonola from $50 to $250. Columbia horn Graphophones from $17.50 to $100.

COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH CO.

Box, 279, Tribune Building, N. Y.

Creators of the Talking-Machine Industry. Pioneers and Leaders in the Talking-Machine Art. Owners of the Fundamental Patents. Largest Manufacturers of Talking-Machines in the World. Prices in Canada plus duty—Headquarters for Canada, 264 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ont. Dealers wanted—exclusive selling rights given where we are not actively represented.